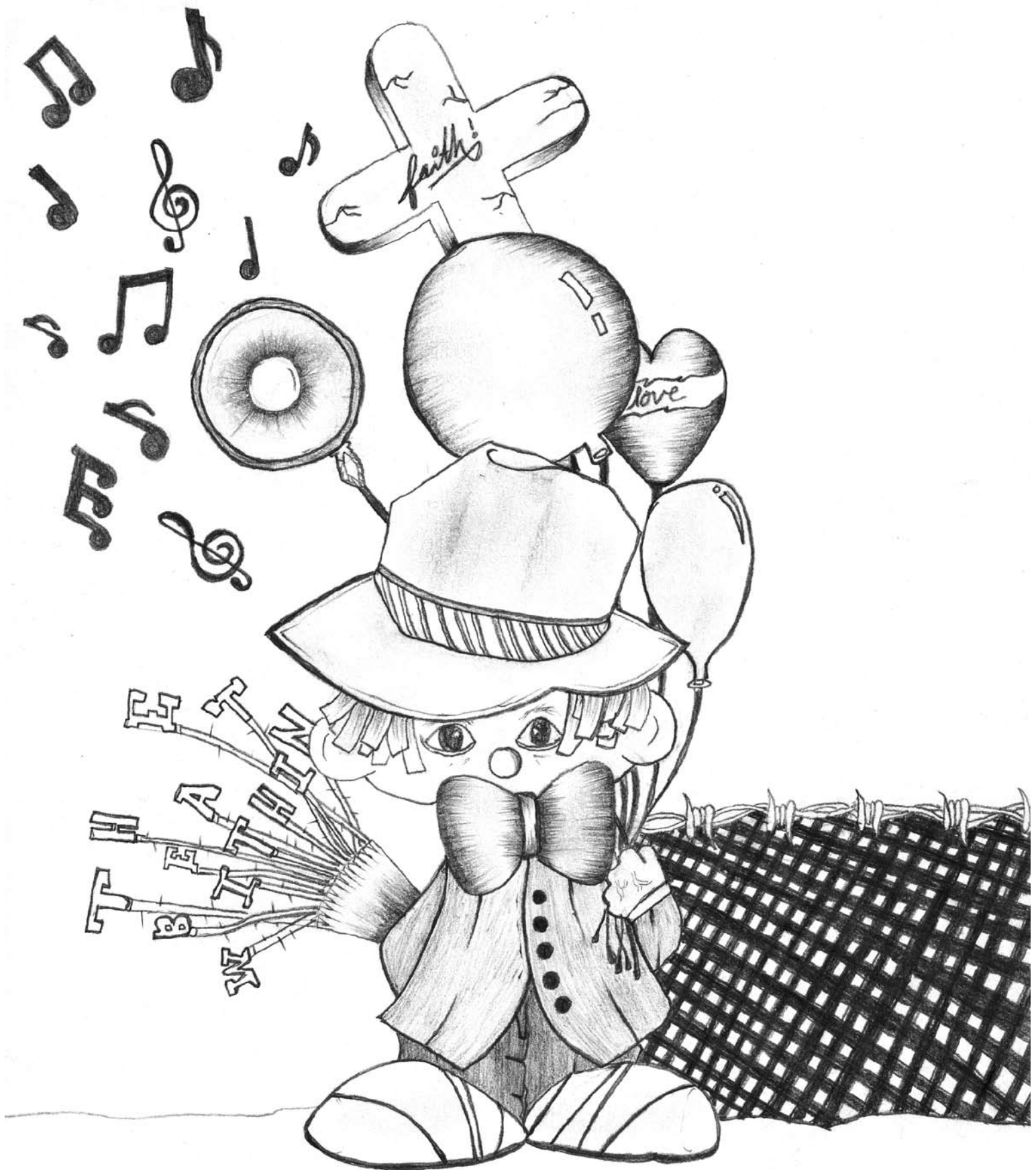


The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 13.28



Putting out a weekly magazine of this size is always a challenging task. But some weeks are more challenging than others. This is one of those extremely difficult weeks — which makes The Beat you're holding in your hand a true accomplishment.

This week began with rumors about The Beat that shook us to our core. We were told by people "in the know" that one of the counties we have been conducting Beat workshops in for a decade now wants to silence The Beat because of something one of their residents wrote which we allowed to be printed. That has caused a furor among the juvenile probation staff, apparently, and the price for the offending words (critical of staff) may well be the entire Beat program in that facility — punishing the entire population of the hall because of a single piece of writing by a single individual! If this happens — and we're desperately hoping that it does not — it would be a terrible price to pay, especially for that facility's Beat writers who have consistently been among the best we feature in The Beat.

Of course, it would also be a tragedy for us, because The Beat is a two-way street. Yes, it provides a real service to incarcerated young people to express themselves, to get their frustrations out on paper instead of taking them out on others, to be published in a magazine read around the world. But it's much more than that. The Beat is also a source of uplift and energy to us who publish it and who conduct the workshops that produce the writing that fills our pages. We truly look forward to each unit we attend and to the writing we bring out of those units each week. To lose an entire county facility over one person's careless writing (and our careless editing) is like losing a member of the family. We are devastated by the prospect and are hoping that we will not have to write this county's RIP as far as The Beat is concerned.

This potential loss of a county we've been conducting workshops in so long would be enough to put the whole week into turmoil, but that wasn't the end of our difficulties.

The office that supports The Beat, Pacific News Service (now called New America Media) is having brand new carpet installed in the entire office. Because of that, the office staff was locked out this past Friday and continued to be locked out today (Monday). That means we had only a four-day week to get as many of our units as we could typed, edited, responded to and laid out in The Beat. Because of this, some of our writers might be disappointed not to find any of their unit represented in this issue. But don't despair, Beaters, if you are not in this issue, it's probably because we're holding what your unit submitted until next week's issue 13.29 (to be published along with that week's writing).

As if this combination of downers was not enough, the carpet caper is still underway at the office, and we're now preparing for another weekend where the office will be closed on Friday and again on the following Monday. That means that this week will only be three days long, which means everybody is working twice as fast as usual.

But wait... there's more! Even though "everybody" is working faster than normal, not "everybody" is at work! Once again, senior Beat staff are in our nation's capital conducting Beat workshops in Washington, D.C.'s juvenile hall! That not only leaves us short-handed in the office, it leaves us wondering how we're going to accommodate all the new counties we are bringing aboard The Beat in the near future: Washington, D.C., Monterey County, Solano County, perhaps San Diego County. And the demand keeps growing. With the recent addition of Fresno County, The Beat now goes coast-to-coast, with stops in New Mexico, Arizona, Minnesota and various other places along the way.

Wow! Actually, that's a double Wow! The first is just for the amount of work we do to get your writing out into the

world! For that, we are indebted to the large number of young people who come through The Beat office on their way from the system's control of their lives and to their own control of their lives. The Beat is a way-station for Beat writers and others who are dedicated to leaving the baggage of the past behind them and moving forward with their lives, in all the many ways that define our lives: family, school, work, play. They aren't making a lot of money, but they are making some money and, while they're here, they are safe and valued. Plus, we couldn't get along without them!

The second Wow! is one we never get tired of expressing, and that's the "Wow!" for the writing that is in this issue. Wow! And, of course, it's not just this issue; it's every issue of this one-of-a-kind publication. There is so much wisdom tucked in these pieces, so much pain, so much laughter, so much hurt, so much hope. This is The Beat at its best, and it's at its best week after week after week. In that sense, this week is like all weeks. To paraphrase an old, old television show ("You Are There"), the writings in this issue reveal "Days like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our times . . . and you were there."

Our topics begin with: What I want to be when I grow up. "How many times have you had to answer this question? And how many times have your answers changed over the years? As children, we may think we want to be in the police or fire department, but as we gain experience, reality changes our views. Now that you are standing at the threshold of your adult lives, what do you want to be when you grow up? Don't hold back! Be bold! If you want to be a doctor, tell us how you're going to do it. If you want to be a football player, what's your path? If you want to be President, tell us why. We can't think of any "wrong" answer to this question — except the answer that will keep you under the system's control!"

Topic number two is: A lesson learned. "They say that 'to err' (to make mistakes) is human. Which means that we all make mistakes in life. Sometimes those mistakes can't be undone, no matter how much we wish they could. But other mistakes are like teachers, giving us lessons in what to do and what not to do in life. So, tell us of one of those mistakes that led you to a lesson learned. What was the mistake you learned from, and what did you learn from it? How has the lesson learned changed you or something in your life for the better?"

And finally, we asked what our writers think about: Joining the U.S. military. "Have you ever wanted to join the U.S. Army or Marines, Air Force or Navy? If the answer is yes, what made (or makes) you want to be in the armed forces? What advantages do you see? If the answer is no, why did you reject this option? What disadvantages do you see? Just a few years ago, all young men were forced to join the military in a process called "The Draft." What would you do if you were subject to the draft and had to serve? If the law forces young men to do military service, should women also have that obligation? Why or why not?"

If anyone doubts the power that words have, just put yourself in our mindset, as we consider how to convince a county probation department that The Beat is worth the occasional lapses of good taste, the occasionally successful efforts of our writers to get over on us with gang communications, the occasional inappropriate word or phrase that gets by us, even the criticism of staff's efforts by those who are the object of those efforts. We admit that all these things sometimes creep into this diamond in the rough, and that sometimes the "rough" becomes too much for some people. But remember, a diamond in the rough is still a diamond.

So, we dedicate this issue to the all the staff in all the institutions in which we conduct workshops who may not like everything they read, but who understand why it's important, and who bite their tongues in the knowledge that they are strong enough to withstand criticism, whether justified or not, and that The Beat is very much worth it!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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Do You Love The Person You Say You Love?

If you really love that person you say you love
then why do you keep making them suffer and go through
all that pain inside? Why? Because you say you can't stop,
because you say your life is devoted to the hood,
to your homeboys, to your city, to that rag that's just
that certain color?

because you say you can't change your ways?
well you're full of bullshh because you can!

It's never too late, no matter how deep you are into the
game, it will never be too late until you die. Don't wait
until that day, just do it!

If you want to try to do it now, you have to really want to
do it too,
accomplish it! so you won't hurt that person you love or
you say you love

because that person can be your mom, dad, or just any
family member that loves you
and you're just too busy drinking, smoking, partying,
doing drugs

with your so called homeboys that love you.

Well no one will ever love you more than your family!
here are no friends, homeboys, whatever, there's just family.

Instead of doing something bad, try to do something
good for someone you love

- it's a lot harder. Trust me, open a bible, look for God,
do something better than just chilling with homeboys
on the block, smoking, drinking, killing people or
something.

Be something or someone good in your life. Better than
what you did.

-The Person With Faith In God

From The Beat: This is an extremely insightful courageous piece/
challenge, and you have identified a real problem with life on the
streets. Why sacrifice the love and friendship of family members to stay
loyal to the streets that don't love back? Is it possible to strike a balance
and be dedicated to your friends while still showing love for your family
and staying out of trouble? Keep doing what you're doing, think about
what means the most to you and how to keep those things in your life.
If more people just tried to "do something good for someone they love,"
like you suggest, the world would be a better place.

Mom And Grandma

Damn! Sixteen years y'all took out yo' life! Sixteen years
to house and clothe me! I regret all the times I gave you
attitude! All the times I ran away from my problems!
Sixteen years you put up with my attitude! When daddy
died, y'all took his place!

Mom! Fourteen kids by yo'self, and you still standing
strong! Daddy died after I was born and you took his
place! You went three years with nine kids, eight boys
and one girl! Me! Then you stood strong and found my
step dad! Mama, I love you! I'm sorry I put you through
this!

Grandma! Sixteen years... Sixteen years! The 16 years
you went through with me! The nights I was alone, you
held me in your arms while I cried! You fed and clothed
me! I ended up with a baby boy and you never held that
against me! Damn, G-Meezie, I love you! I'm sorry I put
you through this!

-Rumbles, San Francisco

From The Beat: This powerful apology brought tears to our eyes — not
just because it is so heartfelt and beautiful, but also because it tells
us that you have turned a corner in your life — from the immaturity
of childhood to the responsibility of adulthood. You are becoming a
responsible young woman, which puts us in mind of this from the Bible:
"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought
as a child; but when I became a (wo)man, I put away childish things."
(1 Corinthians 13:11)

What do you see when you look in the mirror?

Or maybe even what you think?

Well, when I look into the mirror I see

Nothing but an unhappy face

People like stare

At what I wear

But I don't care

'Cause I keep my space

Boys wanting nothing to do with me

But that don't phase me

'Cause I will rise

I am the prize

In God's eyes

As you can see

My mother never said "I love you"

I will shine

And get mine

And stay in line

And be fair

My dad up and left me.

And I feel ashamed.

Asking why me.

I just can't see

How can he

Make me feel the shame.

So when I look into the mirror

You know what I see

I see all my emotions

All this commotion

Craving a dose of the potion

For peace

-Keymah, Alameda

From the Beat: Powerful poem. We hope that the peace you seek will
come from within. Stay strong... it WILL get better with time.

Life

Life... That's what I've been thinking about lately. What
am I going to do different this time? This time I will have
a plan that will succeed.

My past has had it's up and downs. I remember when
I used to play sports and win championships when I was
very young. In the past four years I've been doing none of
that. I've been getting into the 'hood life. That has it's up
and downs, but it has no future, it's either jail or you're
dead. I don't want to have to always look behind my back
for the enemy. It's hard. You really have to be on your
stuff.

Lately, I've been thinking about probably join the
Navy. Since I was young, I always loved jets. I always
wanted to fly one of them jets. It will also give me a lot
of conditioning and discipline. There's a lot of choices in
my life that I can take. I'm 'bout to be 19 in four months.
I'm supposed to get out in three and half months. It's just
in my hands. My life depends on my actions. I WILL DO
THE RIGHT THING.

-Wiggims, San Francisco

From the Beat: When you stop clowning and take the topics seriously,
you really give us some mature thinking and writing, and we appreciate
it. You're absolutely right that, whatever thrills this life gives you,
they're temporary, and they lead to dead-ends. If you've always loved
jet planes, make that your number one priority. How will your record
affect joining the Navy? Whether that's what you choose or not, you
hold your future in your hands. Exercise your choices wisely.

My Last Beat

Finally the day is about to come, the day when I am set free. June 25th. I feel like I've waited for so long for this day and it's really happening now. I can't wait to leave this place, these walls, these people.

I'm ready for my new start. I'm ready to be home. I'm a little scared about getting out into the world with all that temptation. I wanna do good so bad and I'm pretty sure I will, but you know there's always that fear.

As of right now, I feel I'm on the right path, getting a job, going to college. I got my priorities straight now. I'm doing a lot better than I was doing when I came in, that's for sure.

I just wanna do good out there, I don't even wanna come back. This is it for me. I want to do good for me, for my family, for my grandmother. I want to live a normal life with no stress, without having to worry about reporting to somebody.

I gotta do aftercare for six months when I get out, so that makes me nervous. I pray I can get through that. I just hope everybody around me can help me, but ultimately its on me.

So Beat this is it. For us it was nice, but I gotta move on to bigger and better things. I'm always gonna miss Denis from The Beat though, he cool. Well I gotta get ghost. Late Beat. Stay up to all those girls in the unit.

-Genevieve, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Genevieve, it's really exciting that you're getting out! It sounds like you really want to make a change in your life. You've recognized that there's going to be a lot of temptation to fall back into your old habits, but remember how much you want to succeed. The drive you have to get your education and get a job will help you change your life and build a successful future. Never forget the feeling you have right now, and lean on your family for support. We're rooting for you.

My Heart

Can't you see the message
It's hard not to feel the pain
A line no longer wavering
Flat and lifeless with no gain
You wonder how I did it
You're curious to know?
Just a few pills was surely it
My heart needs time, no more

-Poetic Beauty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem with strong underlying sadness. It sounds like you're struggling with a lot of difficult emotions right now. Though it might seem hopeless, you can work through the rough patches. Writing about your feelings really helps get through it, so we encourage you to keep writing poetry. If it ever gets too overwhelming, try talking to someone you trust. Don't resort to extremes, there's always time to rebuild yourself. Stay strong, we believe in you.

A Lesson Learned

A girl burned me, stung like a perm
Stop goin' raw that was a lesson learned
Use a condom it's good for your health
Took her on an emotional rollercoaster
something like the stealth
Got her pregnant thought she was in love
A lil' price: always wear a glove.

-G-Weeze, Alameda

From The Beat: What a great piece. Although it is about a very serious issue, you use humor well to draw the reader in and show a big problem faced by so many young people today. Why do you think folks don't understand until it is too late what a big responsibility sex is? More than a few minutes of pleasure, it can be a very intimate and emotionally vulnerable thing. In addition to pregnancy people can also that can also become infected with life-threatening STDs. And of course, like you describe, you could be creating another life to be responsible for, plus a baby daddy/mama to be tangled up with(!), for the rest of your life.

Some Goals For The Future

I want to be a trusted man, and a responsible person, with a college education at least of four to six years, and be a mechanic or something like that. To get it, all I need to do is stay out of trouble and go to college like I was supposed to do it,

I already graduated from high school, and I was about to start college this week! But instead, I'm here doing time for a stupid decision I make.

All I want to be is a good father to my baby girl Lavelle. I want to be part of her life, and be there for her, and only to her.

My biggest goal is to make her feel proud of her father!

-Diablito, San Francisco

From the Beat: You're only suffering through a temporary slow-down in fulfilling your goals. If you can learn to walk away from situations that once led to violence (even just fighting), then you're well on your way to reclaiming your life — and becoming the father you want to be and that Lavelle will be proud to call Daddy.

Jail Is Like Being In Hell

My mistake that I learned from was coming to juvenile... I learned that being in jail is something you don't want. But it happens, and when it do, it's like you're in hell. Being in jail is taking away all your rights, and your freedom to go and come as you please. You're basically "state property."

You don't get respect in jail. They treat you like an animal, like you're a real criminal, when, really, you're just a kid who made a bad mistake, like everybody does. But they don't look at it like that.

This lesson changed my life because when I got out, I got pregnant, and I knew I had to do what was best for my daughter. I decided not to come back here and be in jail, because I have a daughter to live for and do right by. I would never put my daughter and I in a predicament like that.

-China, San Francisco

From The Beat: If this "lesson" has really changed your life, then your daughter will have a much happier life. You're right; now that you're a mother, you have to put your daughter ahead of yourself and everything else. You've just signed on to the most important job in the world — being a responsible mother. Good luck!

The Pains Of Life — My Loving Dad

When I read 'The Pains of Life', the first thing that came to my mind was Father's Day.

What hurts is that I couldn't physically be there for my dad and tell him Happy Father's Day, because I'm locked up. I feel bad, because my dad has been nothing but good to me and I took it for granted.

My mom has also done everything for me.

I could tell my dad just wants me to straighten up. I can see it on his face, whenever he visits me with my mom. It looks as if he's holding in tears.

As far as childhood goes, I can't think of anything that really hurt me. My parents worked as hard as they could and did the best that they know how, and that's what currently hurts me the most.

Now that I think of it, it hurts me because I want to make my parents proud, both my mom and my dad, but I'm messing up.

-Rex, Alameda

From The Beat: You'll one day have the opportunity to make your parents real proud of you, as long as it stays a desire in your mind. Don't fault yourself too much- you still have a chance to get out and make it up to your parents, but most of all yourself.

My Life

Smile?
I can't smile
Mama look into my weary eyes
Take the time
And you'll notice that I'm lost in this life of crime
Messed up as a young buck
People given up
Got a little older now I'm all stuck
Now I'm dead, at a crossroad
Which way to go
Eighteen on my own
palpitate in the cold
I had a dream that I was laying in a casket
And everyone I knew was stealing money from my basket
Can't trust no one
That's just how the cards are played
I remember what my mama used to say
She said, "you better find a friend that's loyal and true
Best screw him before he screws you"
Often thoughts of suicide
Clouding my mind
No hope for a better life
I'm getting weak and tired
Drift away in the darkness
Like the clouds against a full moon
Don't worry momma I'll be back soon
Kiss her on her forehead I get no reply
Wipe the tears from my eyes
And look up at the midnight skies
Anger is the message I'm sending
Only to reveal I feel so empty
I yell and I kick but nobody cares
I incline, trip, and tumble down stairs
Why doesn't anybody love me?
Or give a shhh to stop and listen
My mentality's going insane
And my eyes starts twitchin'
In a diabolical position
Poking me with a finger
Expecting retaliation
My nerves are razor thin and about to snap
Betrayed by many
Countless knives in my back
Is my destiny prison and jail?
Should I even try to prevail.
Self-reflection in a house or mirrors
Drowning in a pool of tears
I'm not sure how long I can last
Solo and bruised up, walking down this dusty path

-Piglit, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow. Piglit, this is an incredible poem. You are a very talented writer. You express difficult emotions in a beautiful and direct way. You mention that at times you feel like there's no hope left, but remember that you always have the ability to change your life. You ask if your destiny is prison and jail, but it doesn't have to be. Take the way you are feeling now and turn them into more incredible poems. The ability to express your emotions using writing is a powerful tool. You definitely have the talent to become a successful writer.

..you will prevail in whatever you feel it is you need to do in life.

Drift away in the darkness

Like the clouds against a full moon

Don't worry momma I'll be back soon

Kiss her on her forehead I get no reply

Self Pity

Self-Pity is sad and cruelty to ones own life. Self-pity is our worst enemy and if we yield to it, we can never do anything wise in this world.

I do believe I've never seen wild thing sorry for itself. So, why should we be? Look at Malcolm X, he did cocaine, marijuana, and other drugs, yet he became a great man and to do that he had.

No self-pity for himself he just left it behind him and moved on with his life after being incarcerated at north-folk prison.

Also look at Martin Luther King, one time when he was a kid, his grandmother went to a women's day program at church and Martin's family was there but didn't go. His grandmother asked if he wanted to go, and he said "no." and left with his family but didn't really go. Instead, he snuck out his house and went to parade with his friends. While he was there, a boy sent by Martin's family found Martin and told him that his grandmother died from a heart-attack at the church.

Afterward, Martin felt so much guilt as if it were his fault of his grandmother's death and couldn't forgive himself. But even now, look what he became because he had no self-pity for that incident that occurred.

He had faith he also said, "faith is to believe or to know in your heart. You can do something while also knowing you can't. But with it, you will prevail in whatever you feel it is you need to do in life. Look where faith has brought me". And that's why self-pity is our worst enemy. If we yield to it we can never do anything wise in this world.

-Brown, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We like your message so much, and we hope this message touches at least the life of these young people who are here, including yourself. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., are a great example that you can use to change your life. No matter what you've done, and how many mistakes you've committed, you still have the chance and the time to become your own leader, and maybe more than a self-leader. You can become a national leader like they were. Listen to Martin Luther King's words. Again, we enjoyed your piece so much! Thanks!

Becoming A Philanthropist When I Grow Up

I would like to be the boss of a non-profit organization helping people out with any legal or non legal problems. Like helping youngsters get health care, help the Raza get their papers, citizenship. Also help people get into college.

I would first begin networking with a lot of organizations that actually have done those things. See how they did that. And get started, get a group of people that I can share the same dream with. And also to change some of the laws in the U.S. so people can live a better life without going through a lot.

-Revolution, San Francisco

From the Beat: You have a great heart for people your age, people from La Raza, and people in need of help. We hope you are successful with this dream. And we think you're planning to go about it in exactly the right way. Make this your last trip to lock-up, and get started bringing this dream to reality.

Prostitution

I have made many mistakes, but the one I am most disappointed is my latest one, which ended me up in Juvenile Hall where I sit here now writing this; prostitution.

A lot of people look at me funny, and judge me because of this. This is not my first time being convicted of prostitution. I get a lot of funny looks, glares, and people putting me down telling me I need to change my life around. They act like I don't know it's wrong, like I want to do it. They don't even stop to ask me why I'm doing what I'm doing, and when they do ask, they don't understand. What I tell them is "for the money". Then all they can say is "there's other ways to make money, you have a mother to take care of you. Act your age and quit trying to be so grown". They don't understand my situation.

My family is poor, we barely have enough to pay the bills, barely enough to get by. I didn't want to put anymore weight on my mother's shoulders, and prostitution was fast money, it got me what I needed, what I thought was survival. It put clothes on my back, shoes on my feet, food in my stomach...something my mother was struggling to do. Don't get me wrong; she's a good mother and I know she does her best. She's in school getting her bachelor's degree in business so we can have a better life.

After the first time I got caught I wanted to quit. I tried so hard to get a job but no one would hire me because I'm so young and I have shoplifting on my record. So I felt like I was forced back onto the streets, back to my old ways. I cried and cried, so confused, but I had nobody to talk to, nobody to turn to. I wouldn't even talk to my best friend about it, even though I should have.

When I get out, I plan to quit, get back in school so I can earn my missed credits, and most of all get a job so I can really quit prostitution for good. I never liked doing it. I did it because I thought I was surviving.

-Kaitlin, Alameda

From The Beat: This is one of the most honest, well-written, first-hand accounts of what it's like to be a teenaged prostitute we have ever read. No doubt, your sense of reflection, your smarts, and hopefully the love and forgiveness of your family will help you get through this transition. Things are undeniably hard right now, but you are young and the future is all yours. Because of your strong writing skills, education is a probably a good place for you to start, along with talking honestly with your mom, and preparing to deal with anyone out there who may pressure you into getting back into the business. Finally, your PO should be able to connect you with organizations that provide support to former teen prostitutes. Now ask! Best of luck.

Rape

He goes in there and rips off all of her clothes.

He tells her not to tell anyone.

He forces his way on her.

She feels blood running down her legs.

She lets out tears. They fall out like bullets.

She tries to overcome this pain but she can't.

She tells her mom but her mama don't believe her.

Her tears never stop, her pain never leaves,

Her wrists never stop bleeding.

She needs help.

She's afraid to ask.

-Lil' Missy, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a powerful and frightening poem about the suffering that too many girls (and boys too, though they are even more afraid to tell) face, without protection or support or someone to bring the rapist to justice. We hope that reading this poem will help and touch someone who has been through it, or make others aware of how painful it is.

Losing You

As I was reading this topic to myself, one thing came to mind: my first girlfriend...

It was a Monday afternoon during 6th period, when a friend came up to me and asked if I knew what happened to Ayu. I didn't know what she was talking about, so I asked her, "What?"

She said she couldn't tell me, but she would just text it to me.

So I said, "Ok."

As I read the text, my eyes became watery, and I wanted to cry. But instead I kept my head up and asked if it was true.

It was indeed true. At first I didn't believe anyone until I asked a teacher. And the teacher affirmed it.

It was March 2, 2008 when she, my ex-girlfriend, had committed suicide.

No one could believe what had happened.

The next day, our school explained what had happened and there was a moment of silence held for her that morning. As I bowed my head, I felt all the pain rush through my head and I felt like breaking down. Instead I kept quiet, bowed my head, and gave her my prayers even though I do not pray on the daily basis.

Days passed by and I still couldn't stop thinking about her. Then on March 8, 2008, a funeral was held for her at the mortuary in Alameda, and I paid my respects to her. I bought a dozen white roses and brought them to her mother. As I approached the casket/coffin, I got quiet. I looked at her lying there so peaceful, then a teardrop fell from my eyes and I poured my heart out.

I would not forget that day. For that was the first time I cried over anyone like I did that day. It was a pain to see her lay there so helpless and dead.

Growing up, I have never lost a friend to suicide, or anything else. She meant so much to me and it is a shame that she passed away so mournfully. I can't seem to find the words for it. For one thing, she did not deserve what she was going through.

The cause of her death, or what caused her to act the way she did, is still a mystery to me. There's nothing worse than losing a loved one to suicide.

Thinking back at my memories and days I spent with her hurts the most now, because I know I won't ever see her again, until who knows when.

-Tommy, Alameda

From The Beat: We believe you'll one day see her again in due time. She lives as the angel of your heart. You have to be strong and by being strong we don't mean that you can't cry, cry and laugh and share the good memories you had with her. We encourage you to continue to write your thoughts down. Writing helps tremendously. Also out of respect for you and for her, commit to changing your life for the better. What an honor that would be to her family and to you.

A Lesson Learned

Man, a lesson I had to learn the hard way was not using a rubber. Man, my lil' chick got pregnant. Now, that was some shhh I was not ready for. I was telling her we weren't ready for a baby.

She insisted on keeping it but I wasn't having that so we were going at it for about three months before she decided to get the abortion. So after that, I decided to strap them up every time, for real.

-Cal, San Francisco

From the Beat: This is a piece of the week, Cal, because this is such an important message to get across. We know that many people don't like abortion, and that it was a difficult decision, but what happens to a child when his parents are children themselves? Is that fair to a baby coming into the world? We don't think so. Condoms not only protect against unwanted pregnancy, they also protect against unwanted STDs (for both participants). We applaud you for the decision you've made — to be responsible if you're going to have sex.

This Is How It Goes

As I look out my window, as far as I can see
 Gangsta disciples all around me
 Strugglin' with blood and strive to overcome life
 Brothers of struggle strugglin' to survive
 Using guns and violence, jumpin' out of cars look for action
 Tryna get active
 'Cause that's the only way to cease
 Other brothers from tryna feel us with heat
 The way I feel, death is the only anecdote fo' the streets
 But if I could change one thing...
 It's a shame, I don't know what it would be
 'Cause if I brought my loved ones back
 And they die the same way it'd hurt worse than the first
 Puttin' them back in the dirt
 If I tried to change the game somehow, some way
 It'd go back corrupt when the sixth sense come in
 And not chu feelin', not chu smell, not chu hearin', not chu
 sight or taste
 But chu game mind frame... yo' perspective

If one of yo' old school homies was to walk past you, you probably wouldn't recognize him 'cause you wouldn't be payin' him no attention. But if he was runnin' down the street sayin', "Hey, hey Brah! You remember me, Rocket We went to downtown together." That's when yo' mind frame start calculating the one with the killer hoop game.

Then you say, "Yeah, yeah. You the one that played on the basketball team."

Same way with the game. You see a dead body in a casket anywhere, and one of your loved ones died, got short by somebody over drugs or beef, that's when yo' game mind frame comes in. Now you filled with hatred and want retaliation. So now you back smokin' weed, servin' up dope fiends.

This life will never change. If you can see what I can see, you would think that same, but no one can. And if you knew what I knew, you would never be the same.

-E-Boy, San Francisco

From the Beat: You have done a very good job of laying out what the "game mind frame" is like, and why you have it. And we agree, it won't change any time soon. But that leaves change in your hands. If the game won't change, then you have to weigh the consequences of continuing to "play it" (including injury, paralysis, death, not to mention years or an entire life behind bars), and decide whether some different choices might not pay far higher dividends down the line. You can understand the forces that lead so many young people to places like this, but that doesn't mean you have to fall victim to those forces.

Joining The U.S. Military

I never wanted to be in the U.S. Army or Marines, or anything like that, but if I have to go, I wouldn't have a problem with going or have a problem with fighting for my country. If my answer was yes, I'll really like it because I have guns and etc. I see that I have the advantage to put people in jail, like the police put me in Juvenile.

My answer is no because I just don't want to get killed taking a bathroom break or something. I really don't see any disadvantage in this situation. I'll really fight for me and my people if they were to pick me.

I think women should also apply by the same rules we do because I wouldn't think it would be fair; all the men are getting killed and all of the women are just the only ones alive. It'll also be wrong because people such as (men and women) wouldn't be able to make any new-born babies.

-Gregory, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a well thought-out piece of writing. One thing, though, even in times of war when both men and women have to join the military, people still find time to make babies...

I Want To Be A Social Worker

Well, I'm going to be a social worker. I want to work with kids that have been hurt and abused, kids that need to have love and someone to care of them. Social workers don't get paid all that much, but I want to help kids who are in homes that are not safe to live in! This is why I want to be a social worker!

-Lillian, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your life's experiences, and your obvious skills as a writer and thinker, will make you an excellent social worker. Of course, you can't pursue that career as long as you're wasting time here, so we hope you stop doing whatever it is that led you here and start doing what you know you have to do to achieve this very worthy goal. Good luck!

What I Want To Be

I received a letter from my pops, and he told me to think about what I want to do with my life. And now the Beat is asking me the same question. This makes me realize it's time to seriously think about my future.

I always been known as a baller, putting my young homies on when they need help, 'cause I know one day I might need their help. But I know there's always a better way to get paid, a way that won't get me locked up, 'cause I'm tired of being in this weak-ass system, listening to people I don't know and wearing clothes that belong to every young criminal.

Every way to get money is a hustle, but you got to do it smart. I'm thinking about going to a trade school to become an electrician or something else that will cash me out 'cause I'm trying to get filthy rich. If you didn't put this in your head, that's why I'm going to be rolling in a Bentley while your pushing a cart. You might be under a bridge while I'm taking vacations and living in a mansion. Good luck to you, though.

-Mongo, San Francisco

From the Beat: Yes, and good luck to you, too. You're right — we all hustle to put food on the table, but some hustles carry huge risks, while others are much safer. We know you have what it takes to be an electrician, r anything else you want to be. Only, be careful about that desire to be "filthy rich" because far too often, that kind of money chase leaves you filthy, but not rich...

When I Get Out

What's up with The Beat? It's Grimy coming out the big boy unit. But anyway, trial is next week, and this time it's for real. There ain't going to be no waiting another month this time. They're going to really tell me what's going to happen. It's either guilty or not guilty.

But what I want to talk about is that when I get out, I want to really finish school. I am really serious about it because I'm looking at a couple of my uncles that dropped out of school living kind of bad 'cause they don't got no job. They got to wait every two months for his check to come, and I don't want that to happen to me. I wanna be a successful person, and I want to have a chance with people that are getting into trouble.

What I'm going to do is have a program that's going to keep kids off the streets and help them get through life. I know I have bad situation with my life, but it doesn't mean that I can't be a successful person. But anyways, if I do that, I know mom is going to be proud of me for once.

But until next time Late.

-Grimy, San Francisco

From the Beat: We bet your mom is already proud of you. We know we are. We've watched your thinking mature from child to young man, from a wild kid who answers to others to a responsible young man who has set realistic goals for himself to be the person he wants to be. By all means, Grimy, finish school and, if you can, go on to college. Keep the model of your uncles in mind as you push forward, overcoming obstacles that you'll meet along the way. You can do it. We know you can!

As I Look

I think
Between these white walls
All the time
Seems like I'm about to lose my mind
I don't cry
Though I try
One tear comes down my eye
I don't care
If I die
So many people
Now under in my life
Money is my life
From the 'sco you know
Gotta do my thing always fa'sho
As I look
I wonder why people have to die
How is it in the sky
Know you can't get high
It's so peaceful in the sky
As I look
Don't care
What people say
'Cause it is no damn way
I want to change my ways
Why should I
This ain't the old days

-Karmeisha, Alameda

From The Beat: When we read this beautiful poem it makes us feel like we are looking at the sky with you... dreaming of a better day: lighter, cleaner, full of hope. We hope you take inspiration from that blue sky and try to find your own better day!

Jail Makes You Religious

What's up with The Beat? My topic for the week is how jail can make you religious. It's funny how jail can make you start praying, asking god to help you with yo' case and help you get out, knowing you wasn't praying or going to church on the outs.

The DA trying to send me to the state pen for twenty-five years and this my first offense. I pray to god I beat that. Like I said before it's funny how jail can make your religious.

-Iano, San Francisco

From the Beat: We've noticed the same thing you write about, that god seems to come to life for many behind walls. We hope god grants your prayer, but we wonder if, at the same time, you're promising any changes if he does. In other words, are you ready to listen to the prayer god is making to you?

An Underwater Welder

I would like to be in a underwater welder so that I could have a lot of better opportunity for me and my kids to be raised in a better environment than I was brought up in. But if my underwater welding career (doesn't happen), then I'll go to college with my scholarship and study political science so that I could get these chips and laugh at these broke ninjas that's starving. Man, get cha money the right way. Work hard for the money. Congratulate! Don't hate.

-F. B., San Francisco

From the Beat: We've never met anyone who wanted to be an underwater welder before. We're not sure where you'd get training for that, but we're sure it pays very well if you can do it. We also encourage your second option, going to college and studying political science. If you follow through on either one of these goals, you'll definitely get our congratulations!



Same Sex Marriage

I totally agree with same sex marriage. What I don't like is the hating or discrimination. It's okay to be gay.

I love my suga' no matter what. We gon stick thru this no matter what.

I'm glad they passed same-sex marriage because no matter what, there's a person for everyone. No matter shape, skin, eyes, color, background, beliefs, culture, language. Period. Everybody deserves somebody, just like I deserve who I'm with now. We deserve each other more than anything.

If it wasn't for this law, a lot of people couldn't have taken their relationship to the alter like me.

In a couple years, I plan on taking my suga' to the altar and making this official. Even though it is already, I'm talking 'bout certified.

I still got about three months let, been here already five months, whew! Times passin by.

I can't wait to go home and spend time with my baby. Its gon' be a while, but I'm waitin' and hopin' they are too. I just pray and hope nobody takes my suga from me. I doubt it 'cause the relationship we have runs so deep.

But yea I hope the world comes to a better sense and stop hatin' real talk. But yea I said enough, peace in the Middle East.

-Sittatel, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Your opinion is a good one. You justify the importance of equality by comparing it to your own relationship. This piece is very personal, which makes your opinion and your writing more beautiful. Think about the possibility of other opinions on same sex marriage. Why do you think others believe it's so wrong? What would you say to the people that don't support same-sex marriage? Have you had encounters with any of these people? Let's hear what you have to say about the other side.

I Want To Be A Fireman

I've answered this question many times. Over the years my answer has changed to that question. I've wanted to be hella shhh. When I get a lil' older, I really wanna be a firefighter 'cause they make money and they help people and save lives. I'ma go to college and do whatever else I gotta do to be a firefighter.

-Inka, San Francisco

From The Beat: You've chosen a difficult profession, but one that will give you both money and satisfaction knowing that you are helping people. Before you go to college, you have to get your high school diploma. How close are you?

El Dolor De Mi Vida

Lo peor que he vivido es ver que le pegan a mi madre. El era muy borracho y cuando bebía, llegaba a la casa a golpiar a mi madre.

Un día el iba a golpiar a mi madre. Estaba jugando en un campo de football, que está cerca de mi casa. Vi a mi padre cuando venía. Segi jugando y despues vi que mi hermana estaba llorando. Me fui a la casa y miro que mi papa tiene incada a mi madre. Agarré el palo de la escoba y le pegue en la cabeza. Mi papa soltó a mi madre y nos fuimos corriendo de la casa hacia la casa de un hermano de mi madre y ahí nos escondimos. Al día siguiente mi madre se fue otra vez a la casa porque mi madre quería a mi padre.

Despues mi padre se compuso y me fui a traer a mí y a mis hermanos. Despues de un tiempo, mi padre volvio a tomar y quiso matar a mi madre. Le grite, "papa, mateme a mí." Se dirigió hacia mí y agarre un machete. Le dije, "eres mi padre, pero estoy cansado de ver que le pegue a mi mama." Un vecino me agarro y le dije que no le volviera a pegar a mi madre. Mi papa no volvio a tomar más y ahora es un Cristiano junto con mi madre.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho que hayas pasado por mucha violencia en tu vida desde pequeño. La verdad es que si una persona no tiene control al alcohol, no debería tomar. Una gran parte de la violencia domesticas, muertes son debida al alcohol y drogas. Lo bueno es que tu padre pudo recapacitar de su problema a tiempo. En la otra mano, no sabemos que hubieramos hecho en esas situaciones, pero te demo la razón. Hicistes bien y mal. Bien pro defender a tu madre y mal por haber amenazado a tu padre con un machete y haberle pegado. Gracias por tu historia.

The Pain Of My Life

The worst I have lived is witnessing my mom getting bitten. My father was a drunk and when he would come home drunk he would hit my mother.

One day he was going to hit my mother. I was playing in a football field, near my house. I saw him when he was coming. I kept playing and later I saw my sister crying. I left home and I saw that my dad had my mother on her knees. I grabbed the broom and I hit him in the head. My dad let go off my mother, and we left the house running to my uncle's house. The next day my mom went home because she loved my dad. He changed and went took me and my brothers. After a while, he drank again and tried to kill my mother.

I shouted, "dad, kill me." He approached me and I held a machete. I told him, "you are my dad, but I am tired of seeing you hitting my mom."

A neighbor held me, and I told him to never hit my mother again. My dad never drank again. He became a Christian with my mother.

-Tavo, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are sorry that you had to go through a lot of violence in your life since a very young age. The truth is that if a person doesn't have control over alcohol, this person shouldn't drink. A big part of domestic violence and death are created by alcohol and drugs. The good thing is that your dad had time to reflect over his problem on time. On the other hand, we wouldn't know what we could have done in a situation like this, but we give you the right. You did right and wrong. Right, because you were trying to defend your mother and wrong for threatening your father with a machete, and hitting him. Thank for your story,

My Pain Of My Life

Whats crackin' Beat? How you doing? Me alright well anyways today's topic is about the pain of our lives.

Well the most pain that I have right now in my life is seeing my brother on the floor. That was when he had passed away. Every time I think of that it makes me cry. I never ever seen a dead body until that day, the cops and my sister in-law call my mom and told us my brother "Lefty" got shot.

When we got there he was already announced dead. I saw him on the floor and there was a bag over his body.

I miss him so much. I wish I could see him. I been having dreams of him lately. I wish he could come back, we all miss him, his son, baby Cesar is all that we have left of him.

If my brother could come back just one more time I would tell him how much I love and miss him. I wish he could see his son and my son and my other brother's daughters.

This goes out to my brother "Big Lefty" the one and only. I love you brother with all my heart. I wish you could see my son and yours. May you rest in peace. I love you I will see you when I get there.

Well Beat, I really hope you put this in The Beat. Take care. 'Till next time everyone, stay up.

-Corona, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're extremely sorry for your loss. It's hard to lose a loved one, try to remember the good times you had with him. What are ways you can honor his memory? When you're released give a lot of support to your family, they're feeling the pain too. You can get through the mourning phase by sticking close to your loved ones, and in his name and for your little one, turn your own life around!

Ashanti

There's nothing in this world

I appreciate more

than my baby girl Ashanti

Who's about to be four

We've been apart or way too long,

You are growing so fast

I miss you more and more

With the time that goes past.

I will be there every day and I'll keep you protected

Daddy loves you forever... me and you are connected

-Eugene, Alameda

From The Beat: Lovely poem, Eugene, a combination of the feelings in your heart and the skills of your flow. We wish you the best.

Because Of You

To have thought you cared

But it was wayer you faired

To have considered your trust

But instead you must cuss

And beat, bicker, scream

To think pain so serene

To cry and to muster a pitiful glare

Told you beware

My purpose to scare

I'm sure you won't mind

When it's sorrow you find

When I'm not here tomorrow

-Poetic Beauty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's really great that you're using poetry to express your frustration and pain. It seems that this poem is directed to a person that has greatly disrespected you in the past. Remember that it's never worth it to stick with a person that betrays your trust. Clearly, you've recognized that this person is harmful to you and it's a wise decision to leave this person in the past. Keep writing, you're a really powerful writer.

Diary Of A Broken Heart

It's hard to know you said goodbye,
 hard to know you're not in my life,
 hard to know I'll never see you again, and hard to know
 this isn't pretend.

I can't believe you're gone.
 It's hard to think it's happening, or lasting this long.
 When you said you loved me I thought you were for sure.
 How could I be so secure.

I just let you pull the carpet from under my feet.
 Never gave me a chance.

To think I loved you - just please know that.
 It sucks to know we can't go back.

There are so many mistakes I wish I could undo.
 I wish I could hear you say I love you too, but I'll never
 hear that. Not one more time. Never be able to call you
 mine. I wish we weren't apart.

This is the diary of a broken heart.

-Katie, Santa Clara

From The Beat: And writing about it is a way to cope. Write about it, or talk about it. Hard to believe right now, but eventually the sadness and grief will drain right out of you.

Forgiving Her

Forgiving? Why forgive when no apology? I don't get it?
 Why? Why your daughter?

Years and years of abandonment, torture, and abuse,
 from the man she loved? It's what I was exposed to as a
 young child.

Why mama? Can't I just get an apology? I'm sorry
 mija, it's ok now. Here are the words that have haunted
 me. Did I do something to you? I didn't ask to be here. Not
 having my mommy there screwed me over, making your
 money was important, your love.

You know what mom, you did what you had to do,
 and I appreciate it, but I needed you, my mom. Having to
 forgive the woman who gave me birth hurts, but I can't
 change you. I still love you.

Regardless of what I do, God Himself will forgive you,
 but don't worry mom, one day you'll realize, but 'till then
 you're forgiven.

-Jessica, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Nothing we can add to this. This is what you've needed to say. It stands by itself. Remain strong.

Wantin' Shoes While Mama Was Workin' For Food

The best mistakes I made was coming to jail. Coming
 to jail made me see and realize what was happenin' at
 the house. Mama was strugglin', tryin' to make money
 stretch and making food stretch. I wanted new shoes
 every week but Mama had to save money to move to give
 the next landlord money for deposit - and all the things
 we need:

Gas is five dollars a gallon, toothpaste, deodorant,
 socks, t-shirts, and for me not too many shoes: I roll in
 size 17 so I have to order all my shoes. Only Jordans and
 Nike and Lebron James.

Jail changed my life and another way because I'm
 learning more about god and been praying.

-John, Alameda

From The Beat: It seems like the time locked up has given you a new perspective on your life and on what family means to you... because really when you think about it, you don't need more than one pair of sneakers - as long as your feet know which direction to take you! Peace.

One Bad Mistake

They say that's all it takes to share
 your fate in the future
 and that's all it took for me to become a prisoner
 in the system.

that's all it took for me to lose my ambitions,
 and my freedom.

Our thoughts become words,
 your words become actions, and these actions
 to hurt

have deadly reactions
 one simple decision
 could throw you in prison
 there goes your life your dream and your visions

24/7 trapped in your mind
 nothing seems real anymore
 on the main line
 thought how to build more hardships to life
 kill or be killed just to survive

nothings all right
 one final chance up for parole
 but how long will you last out on the streets
 and back into the 'hood

crazy intentions and up to no good
 enemies roll up, homies all post up
 words become bullets one more casket closed up back
 to the jungle your life's thrown away and
 all that took was one bad mistake...

To all take care of business, do what needs to be done,
 but be smart about it. This Mexican

-Rascal, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Your piece is very realistic. What inspired you to write this? Was it due to the lesson you've learned from the mistake you made? Are you here due to a mistake that thrown you into here, and will soon transfer you to prison? It seems like you're still on the same page you were before you came here. How do we know this? Very simple, "To all take care of my business, do what needs to be done, but be smart about it." Is this advice a negative or positive one? Or are you trying to say to do dirt without getting caught?

Once Upon A Time In a Hall Day Dream

Once upon a time there was a man who did not live a
 life of crime,

when he made a mistake he could rewind.

This man was mentally strong, he was always right,
 never wrong.

Everything was perfect, no violence, no killing, always
 love and healing.

And to his mind, he let sail,
 but this is just a once upon a time fairytale,
 but this is reality so never run, never hide, and never be
 cowardly.

I live the true life by the gun and the knife.
 Where I'm from, the gun is my ace, but in my mind, I go
 to a better place.

I like to be in a place where the streets are gold,
 where I walk with God and it's never cold.

But for now, I live 'till I die, and until I'm in heaven
 I'll never smile, never cry so hurry up and don't be late
 and hopefully when I see God, He opens His gates.
 I wish I could live a life where everything is perfect and
 looks how it seems.

I drift in my mind then I wake up and realize it's all just
 a (juvenile) hall day dream.

-Hector, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a beautiful and sad poem, with a sense of strong underlying despair about the life you feel stuck in. But never forget that whether it feels like it or not, life is full of choices. You do not have to spend your life never smiling or denying yourself the peace you dream about. Think about what it is out there that makes you feel so trapped in this lifestyle. You can overcome it if you work at it hard enough. Keep the hope, and remember that you hold the reins.

Growin' Up

When I was a lil' ninja I use to always say I wanted to be a policeman, but the way I grew up I knew I wasn't going to be no police.

Growing up I experience a lot, I also seen a lot to. The things I seen growing up was the same thing others seen as well – murders, drugs, hustlin', gettin' money and being in gangs.

I was caught up in all that except for the drugs part ...I only sold that, I used to drink every day just so I can stay up. When I was lil' the teachers always asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up.

I told them one thang but deep down inside I knew I was gonna be a ninja that sold weed and dope. Because that's what I grew up around and that's the only way I knew how to get money without leavin' the hood.

-J-Baby, Alameda

From The Beat: The greatest thing about human nature is that we have imaginations. Meaning – even if we see nothing but darkness around us, we can dream something better, and then we can follow that dream to make it come true. That's how the light bulb was invented, that's how cars were invented, that's how people rise up from poverty to become businessmen, that's how people become the first person in their family to go to college. Don't just say 'that's all I know'... instead have the courage to learn more – to fight for a better life for yourself.

Stop!

Why do we use a gun?

They do nothing but hurt,

but when we hurt, the hurt doesn't stop hurt.

So please try to stop.

-Peace and Love, Alameda

From The Beat: Though short, this is a really powerful and beautiful piece. You've targeted a big problem, getting guns off the streets is vital. We're happy that you see this. If such a short piece can be so compelling, try and write more on this issue next time.

If You Play With Fire...

A lesson I learned was don't mess with fire 'cause you might get burned. My pop taught me that one day – and he showed my ass too.

But a lesson I learned for coming in here is no matter how smooth you is with yo' shhh, karma gonna sneak up on yo' ass when you don't expect it.

-T-Macaroni, San Francisco

From the Beat: This is a truly important lesson to have learned – but, knowing why you're here, we wonder if you've truly learned it or not. We hope so, because learning this lesson "the hard way" can be really, really hard!

Patient

I'm sitting here waiting for my next court date. I've been waiting for two months now. I can't wait to get sentenced so I don't have to worry about going back to court.

I been trying hard not to mess up my program because people in here talk too much. I'm at the point where I don't give a shhh about no one.

I've been telling my brother about my problems and he told me to keep it cool and don't worry about no one. We only knew each other for like three years and we got close over the year. He's an older brother to me. But anyways everything he told me I took it to heart.

-Lil' Kev, Alameda

From The Beat: It's hard to wait and wait for your court date and have to deal with all the crap in your unit. But good for you! Sounds like you have a wise brother. You can't let people get to you 'cause it will throw you off your goals. When someone messes with you, imagine they're in a TV set and just turn down the volume on them. Stick to your program—try to remember doing what's best for you in the long run is the most important thing. As they say: Living well is the best revenge. Stay true to getting yourself back on your feet and don't sweat the small stuff. You feel us?

Locked Up

First got arrested at the age of thirteen, nothing but a youngster dreaming big things but they all fell apart as soon as I hit this place, stressing but striving though I couldn't think straight,

I was brought up to hate,

I hardly knew nothing else.

I didn't show love to anybody only cared for myself, I can't explain how I felt because at times I just lost it, my mind was running from me.

It left my body forgotten, when I did hit the streets

I never changed anyways and lasted less than two months before I got put away.

That time I tried to do good.

I gladly served my time because I needed the thing back that was rightfully mine,

I eventually got it, and I went back to school.

I finished all my probation and I kept it cool.

I was out for two years until I started slippin'.

I went back to my old ways, I was pistol gripping, Shhh I knew I was trippin' and it wouldn't be long until I got caught up

I was doing too wrong. Now I'm back in this place,

I was facing two strikes, with two years in YA.

I messed up my life, though I only got one.

I'm stuck with it for life.

Once I'm over 18 it's straight to prison for five, but I'm out in '09 and I'm graduated.

I might of made a mistake but now I'm educated...

-Rascal, Santa Clara

From The Beat: That's right, you do only have one life. But that doesn't mean you can't try and change when you get out. When you're released from the system, you have the ability to not slip up again. You can use that education that you're proud of to build yourself a better future. Keep thinking, keep writing, and keep planning your future.

That's Life

I don't claim to be none of the following,

gangsta, thug, hard,

but I once was a hustler, sold dope that's why I'm in here.

I was movin' fast getting paid.

I love money

it was fast comin' and when I got locked it was fast gone.

I learned my lesson.

My mom was a crac head and that's was I sold and my daddy was a cold blooded pimp 'till this day.

I was tryin' to be the next dope dealer millionaire.

I got knowledge from my older

hen on top of that I had females on the track,

pullin' twenty-fours, all night and day

I'd stay out all night sellin' dope and females at age sixteen.

I was ahead of the game getting' paid hustlin' for hours.

Don't take no shower it was fun and depressing at the same time.

I got caught up downtown sellin' dope.

A good thing is I did not get caught sellin' females, which is a good thing.

I'm going to stop and get my degree and go to the army.

I already signed the papers and everything

I really want to change my life around and do right and have a family.

-Shine, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's rare that somebody can realize something about their life and so immediately work to change it. You recently went through a huge transition and we're very proud of you. You've taken the necessary steps to make a change in your life. It's very admirable that you have the ability to pursue the goals you have set out for yourself so quickly, and that quality will take you far.

We Need To Quit

What's up with The Beat? Nah I know The Beat good like always. You know me, Young Mari shinin' like bald heads. I keep trees like I got log legs. Nah...

But fo' real this not a rhyme. I'm finna give y'all a little somethin'. I got nothin' too violent. Fo' real, though, a lesson I've learned was shootin' at my enemies and robbin' people I don't like is not the way to do. All the shhh I've done in my 18 years I should probably have life by now. But I thank the creator for having my back all this time. And I think my mom for showin' me another way.

I'm really serious, when I get out I'm not finna be doing shhh. I usually would get into it with my homies. I really like riding for my dead homies, but fo' real, we need to quit all that shhh because the beef ain't gone never stop if we continue the process.

I'm out for now, but I'ma holla next week.

-Young Mari, San Francisco

From the Beat: We admire your determination to turn a corner in your life, and start something new. We think you can honor your dead homies better by leaving the past for something better — an education, a career, a family, a life. By doing those things, you can keep your dead homies alive in your mind and memory for a long, long time. Good luck!

The Mountain Called Life

It's this mountain called life that everybody gotta climb. Something awaits you at the top, keep that in mind. Of course the mountain gone be steep and have its bumps.

But how are you suppose to get stronger and wiser if it was just a skip and a jump

Of course it's gonna be cloudy and it's gonna have its storms But it's gon' be worth it when you reach the top and reach your final form

The mountain gon' be as high as the sun and the moon But if you keep moving and striving to reach the top you gon' reach it soon.

-Young Art, Alameda

From The Beat: Climbing a mountain is basically just taking a lot of steps. The first step for you might have been writing this great poem. What is your next step?

50,000 Thoughts A Day

Sheerly just told me to write about something positive and I told her I ain't got nothing positive to say. The reason why is 'cause my life has always been around negativity.

The Automatic Negative Thoughts (aka ANTs) took over my mind. I think negatively all day, 'cause that's the way I live. I been around drugs all my life, my momma be smoking rocks, and I even be serving my uncle and I know that I'm helping destroy families like mine was destroyed, but I don't care, 'cause didn't nobody care about my family.

I would serve anybody but my momma and pregnant women ...'cause I be feeling sorry for they lil' babies, but soon as they have that baby I'm on the street all day with them big thangs.

Barudy said we have 50,000 thoughts all day and I know like 49,000 of mine are all negative. People tell me to change my thoughts but why, 'cause they keep money in my pocket and keep me alive so until you can help me, me and the ANTS is on..

-Dirty D, Alameda

From The Beat: Aaah, but the fact that you won't serve a pregnant woman shows that you understand this vicious circle needs to be stopped. Meanwhile we want to know more about those 100 thoughts a day you have that are NOT negative, because the more you focus on them, the more you can do for yourself!

Mom Is Right

A lesson I learned was that my mom don't always tell me the wrong thing. It's been a few times my mom tried to tell me to do right, but I didn't listen because I just wanted to think that she was trying to get on my nerves, or just hating on me.

I think I understand now why she tell me things. She tell me things because she's just trying to look after me and make sure I'm safe.

-Diggz, San Francisco

From the Beat: Why would you think that your mom would hate on you? When you were born, she didn't picture you sitting in jail. She pictured you growing into a responsible man, and everything she tells you is designed to make that a reality. She loves you. It's your turn to show her you love her, too.

Joining the US Military

What poppin' with the reader? Well, I been asked to join the Army, and I was like , "Hell nah!" The person that asked me the question was like, "Why don't you want to join?"

I said I don't want to go out and fight for something that ain't mine, and the person said, "Well, the streets ain't yours, either, and you willin' to die for that, so it's basically the same."

So I said I don't want people telling me what to do, and the person said, "Then why would you go to jail?"

Then I said I might go to the Army because it is like the same thing.

-Young Vell, San Francisco

From the Beat: We think you were right the first time. Why should you fight for something that's not yours? Why should you allow others to tell you what to do? So, instead of agreeing that you might join the Army, we wish you would start refusing to beef for turf that isn't yours and, therefore, not have to face strangers telling you what to do.

A Tough But Valuable Learned

Today I am going to tell you about my mistakes that I made, but it was more like a decision.

Why do I sit behind these walls today? Because I made a bad decision four weeks ago. It probably wasn't the best choice of my life and I know that I have made better choices, but that day it was the end of my life, cause I know that I crossed the line.

In everybody's life, we all fall somewhere. That just happened to be my downfall. But since I have been locked up, it has got me to think that when I set out I want to change my life and go to school and make a better life for me and my daughter. I want to give her the life I never had.

I missed out on my childhood cause I was too busy being fast and chasing after boys, not getting love at home, and people not telling me right from wrong.

I had to learn on my own. I can't blame my parents for everything but it's 50/50 in growing up, so they need to take the blame for 50%. Now I've learned, and when I get out, I am going to change my life. That's how I learned my lesson from mistakes.

Let me ask you this: do you blame your parents for coming here, or yourself?

-Kristi, Alameda

From The Beat: You have a big heart and wisdom beyond your years. We always enjoy seeing you at workshops and this piece you wrote really gives us some insight into the realizations you are coming to these days. We have no doubt that you will be a caring, teaching mom to your daughter and give her the love she deserves. We are never too old to change our ways and start learning about how our hearts work. One last thing? Whatever happened a month ago that landed you in the hall — we don't think it's the end of your life. It may be a new door opening, even if you're looking at some hard time.

The Government

Ain't Never Gonna Brainwash Me

I wouldn't join the U.S. army because I'm not finna risk my life for somebody to get rich off me and I don't get nothing. But that's not the point ...the point is that the government brain wash people talking about how it make you a man and people will be proud of you for defending your country.

But actually when you get hurt they just send you back with nothing but you, yourself, and I. I mean the government is about making money.. they don't care about us.

The system is actually made for us to mess up, that's what they expect us black man to do. I mean you get a government check every month but it ain't no real money not enough to the stuff you do in the army for this country.

They government ain't gone never brain wash me with that bull. They better stick to doing that to all the people who fall for it.

-Edward, Alameda

From The Beat: It's the first line of this piece that really got us thinking, because in every way you show yourself to be an independent thinker who really looks at the world around him and pays attention. But see - every time you let yourself get locked up, you ARE letting people get rich off you: The contractors who get paid to build more prisons, the janky food companies that make unhealthy food - and eventually, the prison guards, whose union is so corrupt that California Labor Federation won't even work with them. So learning how to not be "brainwashed" is a lot more than just not serving the army: It's also about not serving the system!



It's My Life

What up Beat? This be ya boy Lil' Bra. I know that it's a negative thing, but I want to be what I always was, and that is a dope dealer. That's my life. That's what I was taught. The street life is the best life for me.

I also know that even though it's not a good life and it can end me up in jail all the time, it's my life. I also ran my momma crazy.

-Lil' Bra, San Francisco

From the Beat: We admire this piece for your honesty, not for the life you're dedicated to. Is it worth giving up a month of your life because of this choice? A year? Ten years? Were you in the unit when we brought in a guest - a former dope dealer who was shot in the head in a deal gone bad, and now has only half a brain? Yeah, it's his life, too.

What I Want To Be When I Grow Up

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Mike writing out the big dawg unit. When I grow up, I wanna be like myself. I don't want to be no doctor, no lawyer, none of that shhh. I wanna be like myself because I'm a very unique person. Ninjas with billions of dollars can't be like me.

I grew up in the heart of The Point and still living to tell my story. Doctor, lawyers, or sports players can't do the shhh I done. They got hella money but can't walk in my shoes. Money got them conceited and all stuck up like they too good for ninjas. Money make them forget where they came from.

With money I'm still me. That's ninja Mike. I ain't go forget where I came from. That's why I'm so unique.

-Mike, San Francisco

From the Beat: Of course you're unique, Mike. Each one of us is unique in ways. You may be right that doctors, lawyers and sports players can't do what you do, but then, can you do what they do? You may resent them for being rich, but when you're sick, you go to a doctor, and when you're in trouble with the law, you go to a lawyer. They may deserve a little more respect than you give them here.

How To Change

First, you have to get away from the bad people that might put you in the hall. You have to change your way of thinking. If you don't know how you can ask someone who is doing good. Like I went to this program called crisis and it really taught me something and it changed my life.

At first when I went to the program, I thought it was stupid. Then I started paying attention and learned a lot. When I get out I ain't robbing no one. I will be going to school and be someone when I get out. I ain't coming back ever!

RIP Dave RIP cell RIP Webbie

-Devon, Alameda

From The Beat: It's great that you opened yourself up to that program, Crisis. It seems like it taught you a lot. Don't forget how this program influenced your way of thinking when you get out. You have the right mindset in thinking that paying attention and staying out of trouble will get you far. If you're thinking this way, you're on a good path.

I Ain't Happy Here

Being locked up feel like a trip. We can't do nothing. We can't eat when we want to, we can't take a shower when we want to, we can't even go to sleep when we want to. Being locked up is basically being owned by the state, and it don't feel good.

Every night I think about my family, mostly my mom and brother, two of my closest friends in my life. Sometimes I feel like crying, but I hold it back because, why cry when I ain't happy here? Tears are meant for joy, and there's nothing joyful about being locked up.

Sometimes I wish I could travel back in time and be able to change some of the things I did, because as I got older, I started to realize it really wasn't worth it. But by the time I was able to realize what I've done, it's already too late. But that's why everybody learns from their mistakes, or at least try to.

If I could, I would go back in time and change what I did, because I ain't happy here.

-Sammanika, San Francisco

From The Beat: This shows thought and feeling, intelligence and sensitivity. But we wish we had some more details about the changes you hope to bring about in your life so that you don't have to suffer through another experience of lock-up. Of course you can't go back and change things in the past, even though all of us wish we could do that. But, like you say, you can change the future by learning from the mistakes you wish you could change. Also, why do you think tears are only for joy? We've all cried many tears of pain, too, so what's wrong with that?

Wild Child

Born into this world
A black baby
Momma on crack
Daddy is, too
Went to the halls
But it was all cool
Been smokin' weed
Since the age of nine

-Dame

From The Beat: This is the best rap/poem you've ever written for The Beat. See, you don't always have to write from your hyphy imagination. You have a whole lot in your young life to express. You have our hearts.

I Want To Run McDonald's Like A Boss Would

When I grow up, I want to be a pharmacist or a doctor. I would also want to be an entrepreneur and sell my ideas. I can't do shhh, 'cause I'm stuck in here. I wanna continue makin' money any way I can. Openin' a bank account is the first step. Maybe I will end up workin' at McDonalds, El Sufriemiento Quevivimos. Burger King doesn't got it crackin' like McDonalds.

I want to run McDonalds like a boss would. Movin' the product will be my main objective. I want to save people from all the hopelessness by bringin' a cheeseburger in their lives and makin' them smile.

-Bennay

From The Beat: You have a good heart and seem to have some entrepreneurial talents. Food does make people happy, so you got that right. Maybe you could hire people who need jobs, maybe those with no education and/or even those who so far have had to depend on their street skills, then train them well, and when they've earned your trust, promote them.

Joining The Army Is A Crime

I feel that joining the army is just like committing suicide. It is murder when you kill someone, even when you protect yourself, so joining the army is a crime in my book, no exceptions. I love my country—don't get me wrong, but I don't like murder. Bottom line.

-N

From The Beat: Determining to refuse to kill anyone for any reason is a very good reason to never join the military.

I Do Things Too Raw

A real "gangsta", straight up.
I'm bangin'. I do things too raw,
so, ninja, I'm saying, "Step yo' game up,
'cause you below level,
then get on (gang) shhh and get released from the cage.
Danger, man, is my middle name.
Action unthinkable,
mind full of destruction,
with bombs and hella missiles.
I'm not grimly like that,
but my mind set ain't right,
got hit with a weapon,
woke up,
my danger deeds inside.

-Obie

From The Beat: It's hard to tell where your description of your real self ends and your imagination about yourself begins. Why is your mind full of destruction? You write that you're not grimy like that, but if your imagination is full of dangerous deeds, are you sure you'll be able to control those impulses once you're free again? Why don't you talk to an adult, a doctor, someone you trust, now!

Healing

When I grow up I want to be happy. When I was little I said a whole bunch of different shhh, but now I realize that's all that matters. Helping people make me happy. Making other people happy makes me happy. I found that the best way to do these things is through massage therapy and comedy, so I'm going to go to school and become a massage therapist. I'm good at making people laugh, so I'll keep doing that.

I consider massage therapy and comedy healing. If I am a healer, I know I'll be happy.

-Diesel

From The Beat: You really are funny and kind, as well as being generous-spirited. Along with practicing massage, why don't you write out some funny skits, and maybe try some stand-up comedy? When you participate in our Beat topic discussions, you often make everyone laugh and also impart a lot of wisdom.

Marin City (Part 2)

The streets is wild
Ninjas got beef like cows
My eyes so big
You think I'm an owl
All the crack addicts
Are startin' to be meth heads
'Cause crack is like '80s, '90s
The New Millennium drug is meth
The difference is meth
Main ingredient is natural
You can buy it at a drug store
It's worse than crack
The same as heroin

-Black

From The Beat: What is it about meth that has caused it to replace crack or other drugs in Marin City? Is it cheaper, easier to make, does it keep someone higher longer? How has meth affected the youngsters and/or adults in your neighborhood? What can anyone, including you, do to keep it from devastating your community?

Ain't Nothin' Sweeter Than A Lady

What up, Beat? Well, this homie is stuck in hell. Well, I'm gonna say that I feel hella lonely out here. I got a month left and I turn eighteen and I get out, but I wanna meet some fine firme hynas out there. You know this lonely boy needs a hyna.

Well, I'm gonna say this—all those fine hynas out there—stay away from the halls, group homies, and all those places. Hope to see a firme girl somewhere there. Ain't nothing sweeter than a lady. Well, 'til next time.

-Lonely

From The Beat: It can be lonely in juvy, even when you're surrounded by young people your own age. Do you think you should secure your freedom first, establish your life on the outs, then look for a new hyna? What's your plan to stay out?

They Got Your Boy Locked Down

They got your boy locked down. For all you who read The Beat, you can't give up, you got to keep your heads up. For all of you that got two or three years, it ain't nothing.

For all of you youngsters out there reading The Beat, you got to turn your life around. Don't give up. Achieve your goals and don't let know one get to you. I'm out. Peace.

-Mac O

From The Beat: By now you're already out, free, and we hope you take your wise advice to the youngsters and turn your own young life around. But you've got to know that for any youth, facing two or three years of incarceration, has got to be intimidating, and not "nothing."

The Difference Between A Goon and a Gangster

Every gangster starts out as a goon. He must because power is born of force. But when a man continues to use violence, it means he didn't use it right the first time. He is still a goon. His power is always in question, therefore it will one day be usurped.

But a gangster is a man who makes his own rules and the rest are left to follow his, not his gun. A mere smile seals the deal and his word is law.

-Lil JJ

From The Beat: This is an interesting discussion of the different ways people use power. You consider the issue in a philosophical-sounding tone, using language in a style different from your work that we've seen before. We appreciate your taking a different perspective about this tragic issue. We do want to challenge you on something: you imply that, unlike a goon, a gangster has absolute power—that no one can have power over him. But the truth is that he is also a man. Even if he does not actively use his gun, just like anyone who tries to control others in an exploitative way, he is ultimately vulnerable as well. Tell us, is this the only way you see to get respect in the world or are there other ways too?

Why?

Why take my life?

Why take my people?

I don't deserve a brutal beatin!

They say money makes the world go around
and I guess death don't make it stop.

Why put up with it if you through!

Why listen if it's not true!

Why try if you need help?

Instead of asking everybody else them questions
you should be askin yo' self.

But my answer is why without a question!

Why take "Henn" from me?

RIP Hennesy

-Jamarco

From The Beat: This piece has an interesting philosophical tone to it with all the questions it asks. But most importantly, we feel loud and clear the pain of having lost somebody important. We're assuming it is recent. It is just awful to know someone you're close to is dead, and it's far worse when you in the hall when it happens and you can't even grieve how you want to. We're glad you're writing about this, 'cause it can help to express yourself at times like these. Given this death and too many others happening everyday on the streets, what do you think can be done increase the peace so more people are not lost to this crazy life?

Real

I kept it too real

but real wasn't how you felt.

And I looked out for you
when all you had was yourself.

We was sharing the same girls
even wearing each other's clothes
and blood couldn't make us any closer

I suppose yeah we was young
wildin' out in them streets.

And if they had funk wit' you
then best believe

like I was always behind you
so why you lie on my name
just to get yo' shine dude

-Mackin' Nam

From The Beat: This is a really nice piece. Vivid. We are with you throughout the "story." Sounds like you were there for someone who wasn't there for you equally. That's gotta hurt. At the same time, there's simply a level of risk when you travel in circles where this kind of stuff is an issue and people start scrapping trying to keep themselves safe. Best way to protect yourself next time around is by making sure you not even remotely in the position anymore that anyone can snatch on you (even if they lyin').

I'm A Yo-Yoer

What's up Beat? It's ya boy Sed-B. When I grow up I want to be a professional yo-yoer who goes around the world performing. I like to yo-yo because it also calms me. Or I would want to be a cartoonist because I am very good at cartoon drawing. I like to draw because it calms me down when I get angry.

-Sed-B

From The Beat: Sounds like you have some good ways to help calm yourself, and that is very important when you deal with lots of stressful situations like in the hall or on the streets. We've seen your cartoons, and you're right, they are good. Since we can't see you yo-yoing we'll take your word for it. Keep up the inspiration as you get through your time there, keep keeping calm and doing your program. We hope your inspirations help you put in the hard work to get where you want to go.

A Lesson Learned

I learned a lesson from this case. I learned that no matter how long you know a female, when it comes down to it and something serious happens with the police involved, she'll snitch on yo' ass. If the police told her they was gonna give her ten years or any type of time she'll tell on yo' silly ass. But a solid ass female don't care how much time they give her, she won't say nothin' regardless of the situation.

-Told On

From The Beat: Yes, you trusted someone and discovered she valued her own freedom more than yours. What have you learned from that? How will you be sure, before you in the middle of something bad, that you kickin' it with people who value you as much as themselves? But most importantly, why leave it up to another person to decide whether you gonna go free or not? Doing things that are against the law and dangerous make you more vulnerable—are you gonna keep playing with your freedom or make choices that will keep you on the outs?

Radiologist

I want to be a radiologist when I grow up. I did it when I was in the eighth grade. They gave us a job for after school working for Highland Hospital. That's when I got to help the doctor examine the person's bones.

It mostly have to just do x-rays on people's bodies if they have broken bones or any disease and different things like that. When the x-ray machine work by just pressing a button and it take about six or seven minutes before it stops.

-Lil' Major

From The Beat: What a good experience that was when you were working with those doctors. Do you enjoy the sciences in school? Being a doctor requires a lot of school, but it is also a very interesting thing to study if you are seriously committed. And of course being able to help people can be so rewarding. We'd like to know the steps you'll take in achieving this goal and what (if anything) might tempt you away from it, as well as how you might stick to your goals in the face of those temptations.

A Great Lesson Learned

A lesson learned was that I don't need to rob nobody just to make me happy. It took a long time to see that.

Now I'm going to the YA because somebody told the police I did something to him. That's BS because why do I have to rob a young teen for what he got? He don't got no real money because I know the change I am taking by robbin' somebody.

I know that I have robbed people before and I got arrested for it, I learned my lesson when I got out. To be continued...

-Learned From My Mistakes

From The Beat: Sounds like you learned a good lesson and then got into an unfortunate situation. Is there anything you can do in the future to prevent being set up like that? Are there people you know who are more likely to want to mess with you that way?

I Learned

A lesson learned
is when I took that bad turn
to a situation. I highly earned
charged with thirty counts of armed robbery,
was put in a place where people is not treated too
kindly.

Being in this place is a disgrace to my family,
people thinking they should of raised me right,
but no I'm gonna put up that right
and the haters lost sight of
the lessons I learned
all because I took this bad turn!

-Lil' Tone

From The Beat: You are learning that your actions affect others, in addition to yourself. Like your family. You don't like what people be saying about you, so it's up to you to put it right, fo sho. How will you prove that you learned the lessons? What future actions will you be taking, both to help you step up onto the right path and help others see that you are changing?

Big Change

What I want to be when I grow up:
amongst people that made it large and then blew up.
I want to be one of them people that others say
That boy been through it all and kept his head up
even when times was rough.
I want to be somebody that helps others
step they game up
I don't want to be on the block
I want to play with big change bra.

-Lil' New Orleans

From The Beat: Nice piece! We like your sentiments. It can really help to imagine yourself in the future looking back at hard times. We do hope you work your program good and keep going, so you can do just what you say: step up yourself and help others. You look like you doing that already, so keep up the good work.

The Countdown

Man, eighteen days left
'till I touchdown at home.
Must make sure that I keep my stuff tight,
I don't want to comeback to any bootsie facilities.
I'll do my thang on the outs and keep me a job and an
apartment.
I'm gonna take care of my daughter and handle my
responsibilities like a man.
I got a couple job offers and an Apartment, plus take
some classes.

-Sydy Bo

From The Beat: Good for you! Sounds like you got a good plan, and from what we've heard in the past you really want to stick with it. Anything especially tempting that might mess you up? If so, how you gonna overcome it and keep going where you want to go?

Call Me Doctor

I want to be a Pediatrician when I get older because I love
kids and I love being around them. Taking care of them
when they're sick or hurt would be a pleasure for me. So
I plan on having more experiences with kids, because I
take care of my little cousin already and getting prepared
with more would be a joy. I also plan on going to college
to study child-care and nursing.

-Kanisha

From The Beat: It is really exciting that you already have a passion for this kind of work. There are so many interesting professions that give people an opportunity to help kids. What is your favorite age group of kids to work with, and why?

Realest In The Game

Ya boy name is Young Tonio the realest in this game...

-Young Tonio

From The Beat: Sorry we can't publish your piece man. We did appreciate a few of your images, but overall we felt you were bragging without much heart or soul underneath, and that's not what we publish in The Beat.

U.S. Military

I would join the National Guard because they pay or you
to go to any school. Also you get benefits and if you go to
a community college, the money they was going to pay for
yo school goes in your pocket.

-G-Weeze

From The Beat: There sure are a lot of financial incentives in the military. But don't forget it is not "free money." You are taking a risk. If you ever get the chance to make the choice, make sure that you do it with your eyes open. Think of all our boys (and girls) risking their lives over in Iraq right now and those we have lost.

I'll Never Give Up

What's Poppin' Beat? I'm 17 years old in jail, feeling
trapped like a bird in a cage

I never thought I was gonna end up here I had a dream
since I was like sixth grade. It was to be a fireman, and
until this year I wanted to achieve that dream but now
that I ended up here I could never be able to become a
fireman in my life because of the reason that I'm here.

Man I had it planned that was gonna be my future
job for the rest of my life, and now it's screwed. I guess
people are right, you have to be prepared and like have
an a Plan A, or a Plan B even a Plan C. If something don't
work out you would have other choices to choose, but
don't forget my name is William. I'll never give up.

-William

From The Beat: You're right, it's always good to have plans A, B, C.... but just so you know, we think that you might still be able to be a fireman, because this crime was committed when you were a Juvenile. Talk to your probation officer, a counselor, a lawyer, and find out if it's possible to get your records sealed.

My Baby Boy

One lesson that I wish I could undo or make go away but
I'm learning from it is this: Me and a girl was going out for
a while, and we broke up but she has my baby boy so we
have to keep in touch for my son.

I wonder how it going to be for him growing up
knowing me and his mom aren't together.

-Lil' Mike

From the Beat: If your son sees that you and your mother still treat each other with respect and civility, even though you aren't together, he'll be better off than if you were married and fighting with each other! What he needs most though, is for you to be with him out there, teaching him, giving him love, showing him that you are there for him... We hope you are reunited soon.

What I'm Gonna Do

What's up wit' it Beat. I just went to court today and they
said I gotta go back on July 23. This shhh is hella boring.
I can't wait to get out. I'm gonna be with my family and
I'm gonna go chill with the homies. I'm gonna go back to
school and finish high school and get a good job an take
care of my lil' kid.

-B. Slips

From The Beat: These are all worthy goals... how will you achieve them? What is your plan for facing the temptations that the outside world will be facing you with?

Pain

Life ain't been easy for yo' boy Weezy lately
 I'm steady takin' losses
 It seems I have nothing to gain
 Tears splashin' on my pillow
 Now listen up close, can you hear the pain?
 Locked down in a cell
 Goin' through hell
 Even if I cry out
 Will they hear?
 Will they care?
 And to think I could have it worse
 I thirst for another chance
 Ta change
 & hunger fo' a chance to maintain
 Freedom, wisdom, positivity.

-Jamil

From The Beat: "Who if I cried out would hear me among the angels?" That's the first line of a famous poem by a man named Rilke. He wrote about pain and loneliness and the fear of being alone. He was German and wealthy and lived more than 100 years ago. You are young and American and suffering in the system. But you and this German poet have a great deal in common, including talent and a message for the world. Peace.

I Ask God Why?

Life in this jail got me filled up with hatred,
 I say a prayer to myself and ask God to help me make it.
 I wonder if God hear me when I ask for forgiveness,
 My mind is stronger than ever... it seems like jail's my
 only weakness.
 It hurts me more than ever to see my mom behind a
 window,
 I think about how she's hurting as I lay my head on my
 pillow.
 Now I'm sitting in jail for something I wish never
 happened,
 Watching someone you love die man can you imagine.
 Gotta special visit I couldn't stand to see my momma
 cry,
 I sit in my room thinking ..I just ask God, why?
 I would like to say RIP to my loved ones who are no
 longer here.

-Young Teddy

From The Beat: Another great flow, Teddy. Maybe the question to ask is not Why, but What...What can I do to make my life better? What will I need to change when I leave? What decisions and choices will I have to make differently if I want to escape the pain I've seen. There are mysteries in this world we can never understand, but there is a lot we do have power over.

A Valuable Lesson

A lesson learned. I have learned a valuable lesson in life since I got here. The mistakes done outside could not seem serious at the moment, but when you in here you see how things get. Since I been here I been thinking of all the stupid things I have done in my life, and sometimes I just wish I could go back in time and change some of the things I've done in the past.

But I know for sure when I get out I'm going to change. I'm 'bout to change my ways, I'm 'bout to be careful when I'm outside. I'm 'bout to be good.

-Ismael

From The Beat: Reflecting on mistakes in the past and all those wishes you have, however painful, are such an important part of changing. 'Cause in order to change, you have to really want it. You can't go back and change what happened, but that desire helps you follow-through to make "good" new choices in the future. Tell the Beat what it means to you to be "good"? What's your plan for getting there? What's going to be the toughest thing to get in your way? How can you resist temptation and keep going where you want to go?

My Letters to My Girl

Well today I'm going to write about my girl. I remember when her mom didn't like me because of what people told her about me, but a couple of weeks ago she found my girl writing me a letter, and she was like read me the letters that he sends you ...

So she read them to her mom and her mom's thoughts changed about me. She told my girl to tell me if I want to keep going out with her I got to change. So I'm going to change for her, my mom and my pop to make them all proud. Well Beat, I'm out.

-Marcos

From The Beat: Wow, each week we talk about the power of writing, and you just brought it home for real. You showed a side of yourself in your letters that made your girl's mom believe in you. That's deep. Now the next step is making your actions match those words - we sure hope you write us and let us know how things turned out for you, because this piece gave us hope that you can change. Peace!

Young Capy

What's up Beat! This be Young Capy from Oakland still in this weak hall. I'm just mad because I'm still here. Camp is taking hella long to come pick me up.

Well today I'm gonna write about my DAD. I love my dad. He's the only person that been there for me all the time wherever I'm at.

Oh yeah I can't forget my homies too, they my family too. They been there for me all the time too. I bet if they could come visit me, they would.

Well yeah, my dad always comes visit me when he can, and he's always on my side no matter if I'm doing wrong.

My dad hella coo'. I used to smoke weed with him, but not no more, because I don't smoke weed no more. I smoke Newports, but I don't smoke Newports with him, because he smokes Marlboro.

Well yeah my dad is my only parent because I don't talk to my mom because she on some other shhh, so I just kick it with my dad and homies when I used to get homepasses when I was in camp.

Well that's all I got for today, hopefully camp will pick me up next week!

-Lil' Capy

From The Beat: We're glad to hear that you feel good about your relationship with your dad, and since we know you are now in Camp, we congratulate you for making this move towards the outs. We have a question: Some people, even people who smoke weed, might say that they think it's better not to do it with your kid. Do you think there are any drawbacks to your dad smoking weed with you?

When I Grow Up...To Be Continued

When I grow up where do I wanna be...

In jail doing life or living life on the streets?

Do I wanna have kids and be a strong parent,

Or leave or abort them with no family or talent?

Should I say no to the projects and start livin' good,

Or be a bad boy and stay in the hood?

When I grow up, should I stay calm and collected?

Or should I say screw the world and live a life
 destructed?

Should I stay with my ninjas and knock shhh down,
 Or stay peaceful and positive and be kind and wear the
 crown?

To be continued...

-Purple

From The Beat: Like so many of the "To Be Continued" pieces we read in The Beat, this one leaves us hoping and praying for you. Your future could go in so many different directions, and the time is now to truly take care of going with it. Which way will you go? We hope you choose the path that will bring you the pride and happiness you deserve.

Lesson Learned

Comin' to jail was a big lesson learned,
Cryin' in the room as I let my heart burn,
But I let it all flow 'cause it's just a stepping stool,
I consider it a mistake 'cause I gotta follow other rules,
Sometimes I don't listen 'cause I don't always have the
spirit,

Tears constantly droppin' as my son's voice I keep
hearin',

Pick up my gun as I seek for revenge,
Don't care about too much so I harm innocent men,
It feel like I'm alone don't got no people on my side,
But its only makin' me stronger putting my strength up
inside,

Runnin' through the hood as I continue to follow my
squad,

Only seventeen with a strike so it's gone be difficult to
find a job.

-Lil' Doug E Fresh

From The Beat: We'll know that lesson has been learned once we are sure that your love (your feelings for your son, and for yourself) are stronger than your hate (desire for revenge, squad violence, or fear of reaching out for help). If you let the love guide you - then you'll have learned the lesson and best yet - become a teacher. Peace.

Why Die For People You Don't Care About?

The reason why I would not like to join the army is because that when you join the army you are risking getting killed.

And I would never risk my life for them. I'd rather stay on my turf and be gang bangin' and die out there than go to the army and risk getting killed for people I don't care about. So that is the reason why.

-Lil' Lee

From The Beat: There are a lot of similarities between dying in the army and dying for the turf, mainly the grief at funerals, where you see the price we pay for fighting. You are too important to die for the turf - your life is precious. Why throw it away?

Joining the U.S. Military

I would say forcing men or women in the military is wrong because that's just giving them a death ticket, to fight for the war that they probably don't believe in.

-Kanisha

From the Beat: We agree with you about military drafts and are glad there isn't one anymore. Nowadays, what are some of the ways military recruiters get young people to sign up? Do you think they target poor young people?

Guns, And What Mom Told Me

I'm been carrying guns at the age 12 years old, and I been in and out of drive by's.

One day me and my friend was walking down the street and somebody came by shooting. My boy got hit in the back and died. So I ran over there and called the police, I was crying.

And then I called my other boys and they came with the heat. But the only thing that stopped me from shooting, was that my mom always told me that gun don't make you mean ...fists do. So I went by what my mom told me and went with that.

-Charles

From The Beat: We are so sorry that you had such a terrible thing happen to you, and that you lost someone you cared about in such a traumatic way. Did that have a big effect on the way you've lived your life since? We are glad your mother's words convinced you to put away lethal violence... but you are still left with trying to cope with your anger and pain. How do you cope?

I Want To Be A Social Worker

When I grow up, I want to be a social worker because when you are in foster care and a ward of the state, some social workers don't care where they put you. Some homes they put them in, people steal their clothing and things. Or some kids get abused or sexually abused.

I would like to help kids that go through that, and help them set goals for themselves. Some people neglect their foster kids and some parents neglect their kids by not feeding them or giving them clothing. I would like to be the social worker that rescues them out of that and I would like to have a relationship with the kids and really get to know them.

But if I couldn't do that, I would be an actress.

-Mesha

From The Beat: You show so much compassion and wisdom in this piece, we can tell you would be caring and dedicated social worker. But before you rescue foster children, you must first rescue yourself. What advice would you give yourself, if you were your own social worker?

Me and You

Babe girl this shhh right here is coming from the heart.

For real ma no lie I love you from the start

I been looking for you since I was age thirteen.

Ran through all the hoodrat but I need me a Queen.
Once you came into my life you completed my dream.

You make my temper low and my spirit high.

I love everything about you ma, especially your eye.
Cause looking at you make me so happy that I want to
cry.

I never thought in my lifetime you would be mine.

For real wifely, I love you so much no lie.

Men I got to admit I the luckiest dude alive.

Men you so smart, sexy, cute, and fly.

You the type of lady that should ride on Gs.

With me next to you we ride or die.

But I sorry for being absent the last past year. I
sorry for making you sad and dropping tear.

Everyday I pray I can get release so I can come back to
you.

Working hard, late night coming back to you.

Sometime you make me wanna drop down to my knees.

Pull out the fat ring, asking you to marry me.

You the woman that I want to plant my seed.

Or satisfied you however you please.

Without your love I don't know where I would be.

Honey in this lifetime is just you and me.

-Lil' Chopstick

From The Beat: Another great poem Lil' Chopstick, and we like the new name! Keep those flows coming, they will be your strength in the times ahead!

Ten Years From Now

Here's where I want to be ten years from now, so listen closely. Ten years from now, I want to be graduating college with my master's degree so I could be my dream: a lawyer. Why? I want to be a lawyer so I could get innocent people out of jail. With my big house in the hills, just like my great-granny who's no longer here (RIP). With my brand new Benz and my husband -no children- and that's where I want to be.

-Kendal

From The Beat: We have no doubt that you can do it, but remember the wise saying, "The thousand mile journey begins with the first step". Talk to your P.O. about what you can do to get back into school ASAP. Then, talk to a counselor at school about what you need to do to apply for colleges and get financial aid. Good luck!

My Future

What I do is model. Before I came here, that's what I was doing to occupy my time. When I get out I will continue to do modeling.

When I grow up and cannot model anymore, which is in ten more years when I am twenty-five, ('cause when you're twenty-five no model industry will not want to hire you because they think twenty-five is too old), I want to start my own modeling career and teach other young girls about modeling. If they want to continue modeling and have their own modeling career, I will give them the knowledge that they need to succeed in what they want to do for their future.

What I would have to do is go to school and finish what I am doing to have success in my future.

-Moniqua

From The Beat: Sounds like a great plan. We think you're wise to pursue some education. Models, and people who advise models, need to know about money management, contracts, and budgeting. Beauty and brains is a powerful mix!

Inspiration

I count hundreds on the table,
twentys on the flo'.

Count a lot of money on my way to some mo', and I love it.

Once again it's on, I'm back in the booth.
Them haters still lyin but yo boy still the truth.

I don't believe 'em, need to see some proof.
I don't need four doors so I went and brought the coup.
They tryin' to be me,
I'm just tryna be D, and every thing comes to the light,
you'll see.

Them boys in the dark, baby I just shine,
I do it from the heart homie, they just rhyme.

Check yo' watch yeah It's my time,
mind made up I was on my grind.

In that case time wait fo' no man.

Do it again, already done it before man.
you ain't part of the program or maybe you ninjas ain't
listening.

Open yo' eyes I'm a blessing in the sky.

-Damani

From The Beat: This is a really good piece Damani, very different than a lot of what you contribute to the Beat. It's good to see some lighter stuff, something fun and more positive. Keep it up!

I Miss You Mini

Hey what's up Beat? This yo' boy Nano coming from Oakland. Well, I'm going to write about my girl, Mini. I've been with her a year-and-two-months.

Well, we were in a car accident and she was hospitalized. She broke both of her legs. She is getting better now.

When we were in the accident, everybody who was in the car ran, but I stayed with my girl Mini because she was stuck in the car.

The thing that made me feel good was that I stayed with her. I didn't care if I was going to jail. So yeah, I just want to say that I love you Mini and when I get out I'm going to take care of you. I love you!

-Nano

From The Beat: We at The Beat also hope that she gets well very soon. So what's going to be different upon your return home? How does her family feel about you? You have a lot of work ahead of you. Get yourself right, get off probation, into school, and make yourself feel good, and we know Mini will be proud of you too, to see the change in you for the better. Use this as your wake up call!!

Thank You, PO

Well, its me, Julia. I'm leaving on July 1st. I just want to say thank you to my PO for me actually being able to go home instead of a group home. I thank him a lot and will try to not come back here, like go to school, and do counseling and be cool to my grandma so I could show my PO this was the best for me.

-Jewel

From The Beat: The responsibility rests on your shoulders. We hope you make the most of this opportunity for a second chance at freedom.

When I Grow Up

When I was six I wanted to be a police officer. Then the police took my dad and put their pistol in my face, so now I'm a young teen and I want to be a plastic surgeon.

-Youngster

From The Beat: So why now do you want to be a plastic surgeon? Are there other things along the way that you've wanted to be someday? Give us more next time please.

All Three Topics

What do I want to be when I grow up- I want to be a lawyer, the reason I wanna be a lawyer is because, they get a lot of money and I can be havin a Mercedes or a Cadillac and after work I can go back to my females in a clean whip.

The mistake I made was kick it with the wrong people and robbed a car. My lesson was to not kick it with people who aren't your friend and think twice before you do something, and think twice before you choose your real friends.

I thought about the army because I like guns and I don't run from things easily. And if I ever went to war I will be havin' fun laughin', shootin', but not scared of getting shot.

-Michael

From The Beat: It's really ambitious of you to go for all three topics to write on. The problem is though, that you only give us a little piece, an initial thought, on each topic. We don't really get a good idea of where you're coming from. Next time try picking one topic and really answering the questions, really thinking about you're feelings on it.

Betrayed

People are not what they seem. That's what I learned growing up.

Your friend can turn on you, it don't matter how down you are, once you mess up you whole gang can turn their back on you and go after your family. That's what I learned growing up. You don't trust your friends, even if they are down for you, they will turn on you and run up in your house and disrespect your family. They only down for you because you make money and they want part of what you got.

Once you broke and need love, there ain't no love. Only people that gonna be down for you is your family. That's what I learned. My whole life I can't see that people can turn on you, but now I see anything can be done. The only people that gonna show you love is your family. Ain't no love like family love.

-Nguyen

From The Beat: The possibility of betrayal is a really hard lesson to learn. When someone you feel close to turns their back on you just when you need them, it makes you wonder who you can trust, who is a real friend. It's great that you're so close with your family, that you can trust them. But what about your friends? Is there anyone you feel you can trust? If you can't trust your friends, maybe it's time to think about making some other friends you can trust.

Watch Out For Cameras and People Watching

I learned a lesson. I know now to watch my surroundings better. Look out for cameras and people watching.

The reason that I got caught for what I did was because a camera and people watching. When I realized that I was being watched, it was too late. It was messed up because I knew I was going to get caught up. But the messed up part is I got caught up the day after I got out. It was only about 24 hours after I got out, I came back. I didn't even get to do nothin' when I was out.

But it's good, I'm going to pimp whatever program they send me to and get out. Alright then Beat.

-G

From The Beat: G, the real reason you got caught for what you did is that you DID what you did. There's only one way to guarantee that you won't get locked up, and that's to stop doing the things that lock you up! We hope you go legit before it's too late. Peace.

I Want to do Hair, or Become A Lawyer

When I grow up I want to do hair.

Either that or do makeup, both. I'm very good at it and enjoy doing it. I'm already doing my friends' hair. I also do/cut/die my own. I hope to go to a beauty school. If hair doesn't work, I would like to be a lawyer. I've been wanting to be a lawyer for at least two or three years now. I just started wanting to do hair this year when I moved out to Cali. My dream is to open my own hair/makeup salon.

-Caren

From The Beat: These two dreams are both wonderful, and so different from each other! One is about beauty, and working with your hands, and also the way that when you are doing someone's hair you are also chatting with them, about their lives and troubles and joys. The other is about study, and logic, and hopefully also helping someone who needs defending under the law. It shows that you have different talents - and both can take you far, no matter what career you choose!

I Have Learned My Lesson

I been in jail for a month and I've been stressing because I want to be at home with my mom and my kids.

I have learned a lesson that what I did in my past was very stupid. If I could take it all back, I would, but it's not possible. All I can do is learn from my mistakes and move on with my life. Make a way for me to not take steps backward in my life. Moving forward is all I can do now. I've learned a major lesson and it is that life's too short to lose out on it doing stupid things.

I've made a big improvement on my life by being in jail 'cause it opened my eyes and I am now a changed young woman. Jail helped me a lot. I've changed my life.

-Danniqua

From The Beat: What do you think the biggest challenges will be when you get released? It sounds like you have learned from your mistakes and hopefully you can stay on this positive path. Have you ever tried keeping a diary? It can really help when we're trying to make changes in life. It helps to keep checking in with yourself, day by day. You've got a great attitude right now. Best of luck to you.

See The Positive

Ten years from now, I find myself out of college and at a good job. Maybe get married or settle down to a well-rounded man. I see myself out of my mom's house and in my own apartment, just happy.

-Haley

From The Beat: We wish you all the best in pursuing your dreams of happiness and a peaceful life.

What I Want To Become

What Da Baddest want to become. When I graduate out of high school I want to become a fashion designer. I will take a cosmetology class in college and my clothing line will be called Da Baddest, 'cause it will be the baddest line out.

But my major will be business, because real estate and other businesses make get money depending on what it may be. But I know that whatever I may become it will be something that I enjoy t, and that I love.

Since I was 10 I knew how to do hair and dress, so I know that cosmetology will have a very important impact in my life, and I'm a type of person that will go after what I want. All I have to do is stay focused and determined and I will reach my success. That's for everybody that's trying to become somebody.

- Da Baddest

From The Beat: "Do what you love, and the money will follow." Have you ever heard this saying? If you focus yourself on what you love, be it business, fashion design, makeup (cosmetology), and let nothing distract you from it - you WILL be able to make money. As for becoming "somebody" we hope you know that we already think you ARE somebody.

My Birthday Bash!

Q-vole Beat?! Still here shhh. Today is my b-day. We had a good time in the unit cause we celebrate my b-day and I had my special visit. I saw most of all my family. Man having a b-day up in the hall ain't cool. Shhh it feels hella weak 'cause it's not the same being in here. I prefer to be out there with my homies, familia, and ruca(girl) having fun but shhh I'm in here doing time, for a crime that I did but still keeping my head up.

I'm out soon. I'm out to ROP to do my time to be with my ruca(girl) kicking it. shhh I been here eight months and all this time I been here is just dead time that's bullshhh. But like I told my jaina(girl) I'm just going to try my best to be back with her.

Well Beat I'm out to all in here keep it trucha (coo'). Remember time don't do us, we do time.

-Chikillo

From The Beat: It's hard not being with your family and friends. What can you do to stay out and spend more time with your loved ones? You don't want to be there for your next birthday.

Ma Soul/Hard Body

Before I sell my soul I'll lose everything.
The crackers locked me up but when I get out I'm gonna do the same thang.

They could take the crack game from me, I'll find another game

don't get this spit confused ninja this was never ma dream

I only speak on what I seen,

I'd rather kill myself before I tell a lie
If you make the wrong move in them streets it could be yo' life,

My mama lost me to these streets

I told her don't cry

I told her if she understood real she should understand why,

I'm really lost in the thuggin' and I apologize.

-Tay

From The Beat: A person can get lost and then find themselves before they pay the cost/ you say you can find a new game but if it's not legit it's still the same/with all the skills and flows you got/why waste it on a tiny spot/you don't need to apologize/just grow your dreams up to life-size. Peace.

What I'm Going To Be

As you see the title of my piece is what I'm going to be instead of what I want to be. I've learned from experience that just because you want something doesn't mean you're going to get it. So let me tell ya'll what I'm going to be.

When I get older I'm going to enroll myself in cosmetology school so I can become a hair stylist. I know how to do hair really good and it's something that I like to do. I know in order to fulfill my dream of doing this, I'm gone have to step it up and stop playin', comin' to jail, not listening, etc.. just cATTin' off. So I'm gon' step it up and do what I got to do so I can be a hairstylist.

-Skittles

From The Beat: Is there a Beat Within discount for when you become a successful stylist? We hope so, because if you stick to your dreams and fulfill your talent, we might not be able to afford your rates!

What Do You Think I Might Do?

What I'm going to do when I grow up?

Am I still gon' want to get da kata and still bust or am I gonna get a job and don't mob? Or am I gon' be in jail or be in hell?

Or am I gon' live the good life with my new wife?

Or am I gon' still rob and say fahgit a job?

Or am I gone be a dad and be proud and have me first child?

I don't know what you think I might do?

But whatever I do I'm gonna still be from where I'm from dude.

-Zerney

From The Beat: We wish we could see into the future and answer your question, but we can't. One thing we know though: If you decide you want a life you can be proud of, you can fight for it. You have it in you to do great things, to make the world a better place. But you have to choose it.

My Plan is to be A Nurse

When I get out of here I'm going to be going to a group home. Then I'm going to graduate. Then go back to school and graduate and then go look for a job.

Then I'm going to go to school to be a nurse then hopefully have a successful life after that.

-Jillian

From The Beat: Nursing is a great career choice, there is a shortage of nurses all across the nation, which means you can earn very good money, while also having a job that truly helps people. We hope you achieve your goal!

I Change My Mind

It seems like I have answered that question a million times before but I have changed it a whole lot because now that I'm grown I have been through and I know more about certain jobs.

For example when I was younger I use to say I'm going to be a police officer and stop all the crime. I hate police but if I was going to still be one it would be hard because too many people know me and they could go after me for arresting them or one of they family members, and I can't arrest a friend that I might know because where I'm from.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: Well, you first wanted to be a police officer because you wanted to stop crime, but maybe there are other ways to help stop crime by starting at the root: For example, you could be a sports coach who would guide young people away from crime, or a youth mentor, or a teacher, or maybe you could be a counselor, or a firefighter? That way, you'd be helping people, instead of bringing them to jail!

World Wide Struggle

It's a word a world wide struggle and we die if we don't hustle.

It's a world wide struggle from my block to yo block.

It's a real bad struggle on these Oakland streets.

Everyday is a struggle.

Some families don't eat,

momma poor, daddy rich,

but you know he ran off tryin' to get fast money

rocks tryin' to get 'em off

posted on the block,

tired of being on the run.

Ain't nowhere safe

so I gotta keep a gun day by day.

Tell me don't do it, but I do it anyway.

Same thang she told my cousin but he got hit wit' the K.

Jealousy is the reason

got enemies, so many haters

they just want to be a friend of me.

And nowadays you don't know who to trust,

just pray everyday and don't speak too much,

'cause it's a world wide struggle.

To all, keep yo head up, keep it solid, and knock yo' time out. Peace.

-Damani

From The Beat: We hope that as much as you feel the struggle, you can also hold on to the positives, the hopes for the future. No matter how bad things are in the present, there is always hope in the future. You can make changes, you can determine your own future. That's part of the struggle too.

My Life Plan

After all this over

Its back to school for me.

I'll finish I know I can

If collage doesn't work out,

I think Navy is next for me.

If Navy is the way

I would try to be a fire fighter there

After my eight years of Navy

I'll be free done with it

I'll apply for a local fire station

Using the Navy as a boost

On my resume, it looks good

I would work there.

For year after year

Until I can retire

Life would just work fine this way.

If only I can start now!

-Dylan

From The Beat: You could also just apply to be a fire fighter starting now, couldn't you? Do you need to go through the Navy to make it happen?

Being A Cop

Hi I am Jesus and when I was five through ten I was dreaming to be a cop. But then I seen them take my uncle away to prison for twenty-five with an L, and that's when I didn't want to (be a cop), 'cause they took someone from my family away. I didn't want to take someone from someone else's and make them cry and lose a family member. That's why my dream stopped.

-Jesus

From The Beat: It's really crazy how we can want something so bad when we're young, and feel the total opposite about it as we grow up. Views change, we see things we never imagined we would or could. You've got good reasons to not want to be a cop anymore. Since that dream stopped, have another other dreams started? What do you think you want to be when you grow up now?

My Style

Hey, it's Curtisha and today is cool, because tomorrow I'm supposed to get released!! I'm going to tell you about some of my goals to keep me out of here:

Respect my elders

Follow directions given to me

Find a job!!!

Find hobbies that legal

Listen when someone is speaking

When I grow up, I want to be a cosmetologist

I love doing hair, and expressing my artistic style

-Curtisha

From The Beat: You are full of hope, determination and some exciting plans for the future! Maybe try keeping a journal to help you stick to your goals and check in with yourself. It can really help when you're trying to make changes in your life.

This Ain't Right

What's up with it? Yea, this ya' boy Weezy. I wish I would of got a release to the house but, the system was tripping off a violation of a dirty pee test. Instead of sending me home, they sent me to camp for 7 months without even thinking about my family.

Because the judge get to go home and take care his family, that don't mean 'cause I'm in the hall, that I don't have one. I've spent a month in here because of my dirty pee test. I wanted to go home and change my mistakes but I guess now I've got to go to camp and do my time so I can get out and have another chance without probation.

But these seven-months is really eating me alive because I've got a mother and brother to be taking care of, instead of being in the hall.

So the rest of my 16-year-old years are over. I'm going to miss four birthdays including my brother's, dad's, mom's and my birthday. I am going to miss a whole summer. Life is messed up. Oh well, at least I get home passes.

After these seven months I'm going to just kick it so I don't get into anymore trouble, which I won't, because I've been fighting this one for a year.

-Weezy

From The Beat: Don't expect anyone else to care if you don't care. Don't get mad at the judge if he isn't thinking of what your absence would do to the well being of your family. We're glad you're seeing that it's hurting your family to see you in there and you're trying to do something about that, but don't put yourself in that situation in the first place! Don't give any one the option to take you away from those you love the most. And that's your family.

What I Feel About the U.S. Military

Well, I feel people should have a right to make their own decision if they want to go to the military.

Me, as my opinion, I think it ain't right to have these soldiers in unknown countries fighting. Over stupid stuff because of Bush. That is a waste of money that the U.S. is spending. I would not ever go to the army. Though they make good money, but I still don't care.

If I was subject to go to the draft, I would be very mad. I would not want to risk my life going to the army. Also, sometimes people go crazy just seeing all those dead bodies. Then you need to worry about them big spiders. Also, women should not be forced to go. They need to take care of their kids and stuff (the ones who have any).

-E

From The Beat: You raise some great points. Sounds like you have done some reading about the war in Iraq and the difficult things soldiers go through.

Changes Juvy Has Made On Me

My name is Jeremy. Before I came to Juvenile Hall two weeks ago all I wanted to do is hang out with all of my friends on the streets and drink and smoke and party everyday.

For the first semester of school I was going pretty well but started not going to school very much the second semester. Once I got to Juvenile Hall I started thinking about the direction I was headed with my life, the wrong way. When I get out of Juvenile Hall I want to change my life around and start being responsible. I want to get a job, stop smoking and drinking, stay off the streets, and spend time with my family.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: They say that a failure to plan is a plan to fail. Do you think that is true? And if so, what kinds of plans are you making that will help you get what you want after you get out of jail? Because all the old tempting demons will still be there, right?

I Want To Be A Father To My Son

What I want to be when I grow up is a great father to my son. The reason I say that is because I had no father in my life.

My son is about to be one year old on September 17. When I was out in the world that's all my life revolved around.

Now that I'm in here I could focus on the things that I need to do. Know how to do the right things, but it's all about striving to it.

-Anthony.

From The Beat: One of the positives of being locked up is, like you wrote, having time to think. You can figure out a plan that works for you, one that is better for you and your son. You can't be there for your son the way you want to until you have your own stuff worked out. So know it, and strive for it, and be the father you never had.

A Mistake I learned

I made a mistake by violating probation. I have learned a lesson because now I'm back in the hall studying for my G.E.D. and the court ordered I go to placement. But I look forward to trying to better myself and get a job and try to make more positive choices in my life.

-Chris

From The Beat: We hope you've learned your lesson too. Sounds like you've got the start of a plan, get your GED, get a job. These are positive choices that will help you make bigger changes in your life for the future. You've got a great start, if you can stick to it!

Did The System Do You?

I feel like since I was put on probation I've been a victim because I see people who do the same thing I do and they still home. That's why I think I'm a victim of the system.

-Big Hungry

From The Beat: On the other hand, maybe you got lucky. Maybe those people are gonna get caught AFTER they turn 18, when it's adult consequences for adult crimes. You have a chance to switch it all up while you're still a youth - maybe you're not a victim, maybe you're lucky!

We Stay Original

-William

From The Beat: Although we cut your whole piece, we must say you sounds like you feel pretty good about who you are and what you do. As important as that is in life, we wonder if you think about the time you spend locked up, away from people you care about, without your freedom. Does all that go hand in hand with your lifestyle? If you're in the hall, there are parts of your life that need to change if you want to stay out. There's no way around it.

The Pains Of Life

The pains of life that I go through, is life itself. Before I came to juvenile hall, I woke up every morning thinking today is my day to go, or am I going to ruin my life by taking someone else. I think about how I'm going to put some more money in my pocket and how I'm going to do it. I don't sell drugs, so that's out of the question. I don't rob or steal either. There's not that much other stuff I could do, but I ain't going to speak on that.

One thing I do in life to ease the pain is smoke hella weed, drink alcohol like a sailor, and pop pills (three or four). I know it ain't safe or healthy, but I'm me, and can't nobody tell me nothing.

-Vell

From The Beat: You don't have to mine us or anything we say but we guaranteed that you will mine something, or somebody eventually. To get off that subject and to move on- there are many ways to earn money in the positive way. All you have to do is stay in school and you will one day have the things you want. Patience and determination! You have to really want it! How bad do you want to succeed!?

I Support Gay Marriage

I think they should be able to get married if they are the same sex because I don't see anything wrong with it.

I have a gay uncle and a couple of gay and lesbian friends. There isn't anything different about them, other than the fact that they like the same sex.

I think that they are happy about it because now they have the right to marry, which in my opinion, they should have had it from the beginning. So yeah, I support gay marriage.

-Don't trip

From The Beat: You are govern by the constitution of the United states to cast your vote for subjects of your desire and we believe that you speak from the genuineness of your heart.

To All

Keep your heads up in the hall. I'm up at camp right now, doing my second program like it's nothing. But just stay up ... don't let staff or anyone else put you down. Just do what you do and be you. Aight then, be safe. This is yo' boy Bones from Oakland.

-Bones

From The Beat: Your second program? We would rather you told us you hated it - so we'd know that you were taking every possible step to make sure you don't get locked up again!

What I Want To Be When I Grow Up

When I grow up, I want to be a mob leader. Why? Because I want to run shhh, like having b.g's runnin' around doing stuff for me.

I'll have them in the corner sellin' drugs and put some money in their pockets.

I want to be a mob leader also cause, what I be seein in the movies and stuff, and how they live with hella money and lots of girls and stuff like that. One thing my O.G. told me is first in this country you gotta make money, and after the money you get power, then after power that's when you get the women. And to let you know this was what I wanted to be, but not no more. And don't ask me why. The end.

-Lil' Hs

From The Beat: You say you want to be a mob leader for three things - money, power, and women. What is it that's appealing about these three things? And on that note, do you think you need money to gain respect, and power/money to get women? Are there other ways to gain power besides getting money?

Pain In Life

What's up with it,

I'm a let it be known off top... ninjas are dying left and right,

for some reason, we fail to realize that.

Most of us have been through our ups and downs,

With plenty of pains and struggles.

My struggles are knowing when I get out of here.

I'm a be put right back in the same jets (projects) with the same ninjas that was doing the same thing when I came in.

My pain is knowing that there's someone out there just like me.

It might be you... but God is the answer to everything. Have faith, and fear nothing but Jesus. He'll get you through a lot brah. I know from experience, so with all that said, it's a struggle for most of us. We just fail to realize how easy we really got it. RIP Kia and Kiah...

-Young J

From The Beat: That's right, there are many individuals around the world that are worse off than us. We hope that a solution will eventually rise to meet your current struggles. What would work for you in an ideal world?

Don't Hate On Me

You ninjas ain't messing wit the kid, I'm a legend where I live.

Get a faction from yo girl to stepping in her pearl.

When I step up out her crib them boys all right but they ain't spittin like I'm is.

Lil Dirt bra you can ask you girl about me she will tell you that I got figgas ninja yeah.

Find me in the house in yo' spot on the couch watching movies an eatin popsicles ninja.

Get mad 'cause I took yo' thang, but I will have ninjas pouring liquor every time they hear yo' name. Rest in peace Jay-Jay.

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: You've got a lot going on in this piece, it's a little hard to follow, so we cut the part we could not follow. Next time stick to one thought, one idea, and write about that. We want the readers to understand where you're coming from.

Weed, Drank, Pills, and Boe

What up Beat? Why do I do drugs? Because I have to escape reality, because my reality is not the best. Drugs make me forget what I have been through and my stresses. But I have to face it when I get down off the drug.

-Gone Bad Reese

From The Beat: You make a good case of why drugs are not solving your problems. They don't fix anything, just make your forget, and the forgetting doesn't last very long. Maybe there's something else you can do to help you relieve the stress - like running or listening to music.

A Lesson From Lock Up

A lesson learned to me is doing some solid time in the hall. I'm tired of being locked up like an animal and being told when I can eat, sleep, and shower. This place ain't cool, and when you in here for a long period of time, you start stressing because being away from my family is hard for me. Plus, being around a lot of people I don't know ain't me. But I'm not gone get mad 'cause I brought myself here and I'm gone do my time. Peace.

-Damani

From The Beat: What is the lesson you learned from being in the hall? Is it to not make the same mistakes again? Or maybe a lesson about valuing your freedom more? What's the lesson?

Lightweight Cool

Bein' in camp is lightweight cool 'cause you goin' home and everything, but it's also bein' around these J-cats that claim to be cool and be on yo' side ...but then you see fake ninjas true colors when they want to fight you 'cause you doin' good, goin' home 'cause they not. They stuck here at camp and they been here for 3-4 months.

Me bein' the mack that I am, I got everything online 'cause when cats holler that loud shhh. Then when you see 'em they act like it all be cool. Ninjas be fake as hell... I'm always up here getting into arguments or a fight and I heard my right hand almost got jumped before he got transferred to Santa Rita a week ago.

I'm about to get out so you know me I ain't trippin, 'cause I'm out next month.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: Part of why you get into fights is because of camp conflicts and the stress of too many people on top of each other, but part of it is also that you have a temper - in the past that temper has caused you stress, and now is a good time for you to be practicing your skills at walking away, and rising above, right?

For My Son

This is a good example sitting in here about a lesson learned. Now I know about makin the better choice for my son. Now I know that life isn't just about me no more.

-Anthony

From The Beat: That's a really important and difficult lesson to learn. When there are other people who truly depend on you for everything, it can be both powerful and overwhelming. We're glad you're up for this exciting challenge.

Ballin' On The Court

When I grow up I want to play in the NBA because they make a lot of money and I like to play basketball. I will go to school and finish so I can get drafted.

-Young Labron

From The Beat: It's always great to find a career that you enjoy. It'll be hard, but keep working at it; we see you have the motivation. Keep practicing, and continue believing you can get there.

Hood Star

When I grow up I want to be a hood star and get all the money and all the cars and do what I do best, which is get the girls. And I want to have my own house and buy my mother the world and my sisters. I'm also gonna try to stay out of jail.

-Sassy

From The Beat: Sassy, sounds like you have quite a dream. It's great to have aspirations. Instead of just trying to stay out of jail, make sure that doesn't happen. You can be successful and support your family if you stay out of trouble. 'Cause if you get in trouble and come back to jail, how are you gonna plan to give your mother a house, and the world to your sisters behind bars? Who's gonna be out there looking out for them? Certainly not you if you're locked behind steel gates!

Sideshow: A Way of Life

Man, to me a sideshow is the way of a life. Sideshows are fun, but sometimes people can get hurt because people want to be stupid and drink, drive, and pop pills. But a sideshow has what all you need. They have music, nice cars, and hella women ... and everybody just have fun. But it's just not fun, it's a way of life. The bay area do it the most 'cause we do get down. Oakland do get down.

-Yung Ak

From The Beat: Sideshows are homegrown Oakland culture, where some of the best music and dance moves come from - but people bring their drama to those shows sometimes, and people get hurt... is there some way to keep the fun, and the art, and get rid of the drama?

A Lesson NOT Learned

Learning a lesson for me is hard. That's why I've been locked up 3 times. The other 2 times I said I wasn't coming back. but look where I'm at. Now, at camp for 7 months. So I guess it's hard for me to learn a lesson.

-Lil' Rikki

From The Beat: What do you think keeps drawing you back into situations you don't want to be in? Is it your friends, your habits? What would help you stop those bad habits?

This Country Has Not Done Nothing For Me

Joining the U.S. Military, me I wouldn't join the U.S.. Military. I am not going to risk my life for no country that has not done nothing for me.

-Lil' Rikki

From The Beat: This is a good way to think of it - what would you risk your life for? For the ones you loved? For something you believe in? These days there are people risking their lives just to look hard, or just to take revenge, or sometimes, they do it just because they don't stop to think. Does that happen to you?

I'll Probably Run

I'm from the streets born and raised in East Palo Alto. I've got nothing to do but do time at camp getting stupid ass write ups forget this stuff I'm just a restricted boy at camp. Never go home just try and try to go home. Once I go home it's good. If everything goes bad I'll probably run. My mom won't like it but screw it.

-Gustavo

From The Beat: You wrote this about a month ago, but here you are, you haven't run yet, and you seem to be doing well at camp. What has kept you from running? And are you proud of yourself?

Money

Money over females

But I wont get into detail

Tryin' to get money is like a dog tryin' to get its tail

Money is my jeans looking all clean

Ninjas jus' want to be like me looking like a dope fiend

Some purple looking like a Bing-Bing

Town business every day

Guns are always in play

So always, always watch what you say.

-Go Diego Go

From The Beat: Which matters more - short term money, or long term money? Meaning - money to pay for a car that won't break down, money to buy a house, money that is so legit the government can't touch it, where you keep it in a bank, pay taxes on it, leave it to your children when you go? And how are you gonna go about earning that long term money?

Just Playin'

A lesson that I learned at Camp Wilmont Sweeney is to not get locked up no more. Getting locked up is the worst feeling because you can't see all your family or your loved ones. It's because it was New Years and I couldn't do nothing because I was locked up and I couldn't do anything because I had room times.

I missed my family and all I got is a visit only eating a bag of chips and drank an 8 oz. bottle of soda. It was my favorite soda. It was a Sprite. Naw, just playing. I was out on New Yearsdoing a fool.

-Hoang

From The Beat: You had us going there for a minute, thinking you did have to suffer that lonely new years...we're glad you didn't, and we hope you don't!

A Lesson Learned

A lesson I learned is been coming to detainee at a Juvenile hall. It is a big mistake that I started seeing this place. I learned that you give up all your rights when you enter this place. You leave your family and friends behind. Now that I have been here a lot they aren't sending me home. Free me.

-Gone Bad Reese

From The Beat: You say you've learned your lesson by being in the hall, but you've been locked up more than once, and here you are back again. What makes you sure you've learned the lesson of not wanting to give up your freedom anymore? Is there something different this time than the times before?

The Lock Up Lesson

I learned my lesson by getting locked up so many times.

I used to always say I'm not going to come back to the hall, but I still find a way to return. But now that I got a baby boy on the way I'm tired of coming back to the hall. But me, I look at it like you won't come back until you really tired. You won't change until you like at the end of yo rope.

But what really inspire me to do the right thing is my son. I don't want him to go down the same path.

- Rick

From The Beat: Feeling done with the hall enough to actually change happens in a different way for everyone. Having a baby is a really big motivator for change, and sort of puts you at the end of your rope like you said. It gives you that push to make changes, and now you can do exactly that, and be there for your son.

This Life

What's up my dude, my goon, what's cracking? Well today I'm gonna write about my town life.

Well I've been hustling since I was 8 years old selling coke, crack, and purp. I got shot when I was 12 years old and was charge with armed robbery though a gun was not found.

My mom used to be pushing kilos all through the town selling everywhere until she got caught with some weed and that's when she stopped. Most of my O.G's and young potnas is doing life, but I've been on my toes watching for snitches and living my dirty life tryin' to survive. Watching my back and getting dough has been my main thing.

-Chilltels

From The Beat: We can see it's been tough for you in the past. As hard as it may seem, there's always time to change. If you continue to live this life you'll end up in jail or dead. You have seen how this life has negatively affected yourself and your loved ones, so use it to motivate yourself to change when you get out. You already said all of your peers are doing life. So believe in yourself to do better, we do.

What I Want To Be When I Grow Up

Waddup beat? This is Navie. And what I want to be when I grow up is a rapper. I started rappin' since the age of 10, and I'm very into it. Whenever I'm angry, I would write whatever is on my mind and it would calm me down, so when I get out, I'm going to try to make my way to the top.

So to all the people out there, don't give up on what you want to be when you grow up. That's all I gotta say. Deuce out.

-Navie

From The Beat: It's great that you have an outlet to help get rid of your anger and stresses. It's even better that you can use your outlet and turn it into something productive, a goal of yours. Just keep at it, work as hard as you can doing it.

Getting Out

Getting out, that's the first thing you ask yourself when you get locked up. "When am I getting out?"

A lot of people change after they get out. But others don't. They stay doing the stupid things that got them locked up in the first place.

Being locked up is hard on some people. The only thing you can really do is think. Think about what you can do to change the way you're living...

-Andrew

From The Beat: That's in part of the Juvenile Justice System's purpose; to rehabilitate youth through certain discipline tactics and strategies. We hope the use of the system serve you well, but there are many that will disagree with the system's effectiveness. We hope you decide to think for yourself and change for the better so you won't find yourself in these institutions.

Oldies

While layin' down on them late night in my cell, I be listening to them oldies. They got me thinking 'bout when I was on the outs chillin' with my brother. And the homies sippin' on a bottle or smoking trees while sittin' next to a female.

Every time I think about them memories it helps me get through this time easier, and with my release day comin' up, there are so many thing I want to do, like chillin' with the fam' and homies, and mostly a female.

All this time I've been locked down got me institutionalized, I just hope I don't go to the next level only time soon since I'm already 18.

-Dopey

From The Beat: We hope the best for you now that you are an adult. Good luck out there, and remember we will always be happy to print your updates in The Beat!

Lovin' Life

A favor for a favor
Two pistols for a cayola'
Mob trade ain't nothing greater
They're getting paper
I got my guns right
I gotta get my funds right
And I got kids - sucka
So I love life!

-Hurt

From The Beat: Nice poem. You have talent in this area. Use this talent to start a more positive chapter of your life. Do right for your kids, make sure they don't live a dangerous life like the one you've described.

Responsible

For me, when I didn't take responsibility, it seemed like everything would go wrong. I know I could stop it, but I let it happen anyway because I knew what would have happened if I didn't. It would have gotten me in big trouble.

All I'm trying to say is do what's right for your safety. For instance, if you know someone who got a gun, you should tell people to get away. But no, you just run and don't let anyone know and people get shot. You be like, if I'd said something, it would have never happened. That's taking responsibility.

-Boss Man

From The Beat: We are all responsible for governing this world and it is respectable and responsible to have courtesy for other human life. There's not many that think like you, we hope to receive and hear more of your knowledge.

My Hood

Growing up in my hood ain't no joke.
You show signs of weakness and you'll get your wig split.

The homies stay strapped.
It's where you keep your eyes open and your mouth shut,

here we have zero tolerance for snitching.

No ifs, ands, or buts about it.

Speak on the hood, and there will be problems

-Youngsta Fool

From The Beat: Don't want to be something that you can't handle the consequences of. It sounds like a cool thing to have hood friends and love ones that care for you and you care for them but the things that you decide to indulge in together determines who's going to be living today and those who will die tomorrow.

...And I Want To Die Happy and Old

I want to be a man well respected by everyone and every person

I just want to be a man that works hard for everything I buy.

I want to be a father to my kids.

I want to be an owner of houses and business

I just want to grow up to become an old man of about 90 then die happy and old.

-Mat

From The Beat: This is an ideal dream for a boy about to become a man/ Now you've got to break it down: Your step-by-step plan.

I Want To Be a G!

When I grow up I want to be a gangster because that's how my life started when I was younger, like always living mi Vida Loca. We'll still try to be good in here but when I get out all my enemies better run and hide.

Most of my homies are in here but we still be putting it down for the varrio. We are cholos for life. We're just waiting to get out and be in the varrió. Well Beat see you soon.

-Chikillo

From The Beat: Look where your vida loca landed you; you're locked up. Your enemies may have done you wrong, but you won't benefit by focusing on fighting. Instead, use your time in juvi to think. What did you do to get here? What can you do to avoid coming back, without just not getting caught? Focus on changing things about your life to help you succeed. Start thinking more about yourself and your future, and not about your crazy life.

To The Streets

I'm gonna get to the streets that then lost too many of my ninjas.

This street life ain't it but I'm ready for whatever these streets offer.

Bring a ninja to these streets is dangerous, but shhh, that's how life is, right?

This street life gotta be gone

I don't know why

I'm tryin' to see a couple million before I die.

That's why I'm gonna get the streets ...but in my mind still a baby.

-Shadow the Rich Kid

From The Beat: If you just went a mile or two from the streets that are your home, and as you say here, are "not it", you'd see that there is a whole world out there where people work for a living, walk at night and feel safe, where it's more parties than funerals, where you can be white, black, Latino, Asian, whatever, and if you work hard, you'll find you can have a future, not just a wild present. Don't you and the people growing up on your streets deserve a life like that?

Lesson Learned

I learned my lesson when I first went in but I still can't do right. When I get out I'm gonna do right and don't come back 'cause I like to be free. And I'm tired of being in here. I did four months and I been free for only two weeks but I'm straight.

-Pinky

From The Beat: We're glad that you are motivated to stay out. It seems that it took you some time to realize it, but this is a great realization. Keep this in mind while you're out, and use it as a reason to stay out of trouble.

I Go Home

Them I'm hella happy because I go home on my first home visit this Saturday, and I been here for a month and a half. I got a write-up and I'll probably only go for 8 hours, but I don't care, because it's better than nothing and I get to see my family. If I keep on doing good, I'm going to go home every weekend. That's why I am happy because I thought I never was going to get my home visit because I was hella bad in camp. But now I'm changed and I got my HV. I want to see everybody... like my big brother, my three sisters, and my mom and dad.

-Oakland

From The Beat: Sorry your first visit was short, but it's good that you got to go home. Did you enjoy it? Do you feel like you're getting ready for that free life when you get out of camp?

Living The Life of a College Student in Camp Sweeney

Well it's been a long time since I've been here. Let's begin. I wake up at Camp Sweeney, brush my teeth, and chill for a minute.

Then I get picked up at 8 AM for a temp. release. I go down the hall and I get dressed in my fit. Smoke a 'port and drive over to Chabot College. Shhh, you know me... I do my thang, get my education, chill with my girl, eat lunch.

Sometimes I go do more work but most the time I chill and watch movies. Once the clock hits 4pm, I get dressed back into camp clothes and start driving back to Camp Sweeney.

Once I get here it's about 5pm, dinner time. I really hate this messed County Food so I don't eat it and I wait, we have a staff break then pee, showers, and sleep to wake up to another temp. release. Shhh, I only have 6 more weeks in this camp, and then I'm free. You know time flies.

-Pedro

From The Beat: Congratulations on the success you've managed to have, even while coping with incarceration. What are your long term plans, and do you think you've gone legit for good this time?

I Wannabe A...

I wanna be an entrepreneur when I grow up. I wanna have my own string of business. I wanna have my own clothing line.

I wanna have a string of women working for me. I'm bout to go have the women go out and promote. I'm inspired by money.

-C

From The Beat: Though it is money that is inspiring you and not something else, it's good to have something motivating you. But, with money as your inspiration, it's easy to stray from a positive path. Make sure you stick to your goals of being an entrepreneur and don't end up back in jail. Good luck on your clothing line!

Never Repeat The Same Mistake

Hey, que ondas, Beat? Pues, today I'm 'bout to drop some lines on the second topic. A lesson I learned is to never repeat the same mistake twice, meaning once I learn something, weather the easy way or the hard way, I keep that in mind as a lesson learned. I remember the outcome and don't forget it, 'cause if it don't turn out the way it's supposed to be the first time, pues, I'm not 'bout to test my luck an' do it a second time. I'll just switch it up and come up with something better.

Orale. pues, Beat, I'm out. Alrato.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Well, if it's true that you avoid making the same mistakes more than once, we have to ask you a hard question: Is this the first time you've handed away your freedom to strangers? If not, then apparently even after you "switch it up" it isn't keeping you from experiencing the same results.

Joining The US Military

I ain't joinin' a damn army. I don't condone what the army's doin' in Iraq, but there's nothing I can do about it.

Them felons keep it rockin' and we ain't going to work for nobody that wanna lock us up for holdin' our side. People tellin' on (fools) now, so we keep it on the down low, but we ain't joining them people. They wanna lock us up and give out football numbers (a long time in jail).

-G

From The Beat: Do you see any similarity between you holdin' it down for your side, as you write, which can mean going to war in your streets, and other young American men and women your age going to wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? Is the impulse for young people to protect their people, their territory, their country, in any way the same? Why don't you write a piece for The Beat that describes any likeness or difference between young people defending what they consider theirs, whether it's their people, their neighborhood or, as people in the military usually believe, their country?

Talkin'

It's yo' boy, G-Enano. It's funny to me how ninjas like to snitch, while they locked up and think that nobody gonna find out, that's the funny thing, and they walk around here, thinking they sick, but, really that's how these suckas roll. It ain't nothing new--their kind snitch for a living.

-G-Enano

From The Beat: You already know that some people snitch just because they're jealous of you, angry at you, in a bad mood, to impress counselors, even for the fun of it. So, why don't you stop doing whatever, that can expose you to a potential snitch's moods, even mercy? Until you stop any mess, you'll be vulnerable to anybody who knows what you're into. Hello, emotional blackmail.

Tired Of Our "Hoods Being Torn Down

I want to be a big-time drug dealer and feed the whole neighborhood, feel me? I want everybody to eat because I'm tired of our 'hoods bein' torn down by them white people.

-Young C

From The Beat: It's totally true that some neighborhoods, including yours, are becoming "gentrified", meaning that Black families are being pressured to move out, to be replaced by people of other races, to redevelop those beautiful areas. You have a right to be deeply angry, but what does that have to do with your selling drugs in your community? Doesn't that just give your neighborhood more of a reputation of being dangerous, along with youths carrying weapons? With the economy getting seriously worse for everybody, the pressure will become even heavier for your community to maintain itself. Do you seriously use the money you earn drug dealing to feed your neighbors? How can you be real and help them? Doesn't your being in juvy or selling drugs just teach your little neighbor kids to deal drugs, like you? Why not get a job and teach the kids to do something useful?

My Views

Shhh on the streets ain't changed a bit. Got the homies on the streets riding the beef out. But you know me, I'm gonna stay true to the game. I live to see the next day. I don't choose to be in the game—this is the way I was raised. Can't nobody flip me out, 'cause I only go one way and one direction, and that's to fight for what I believe in.

Homies out on them streets pushing work and best believe, if you got what we want, ninjas gone get murked. Like the blood pumping through my veins. We sit back and just annihilate and we be making dough, so ninjas wanna hate. It's the pride in me that get to me. It's either "respect" or get disrespected.

-Moreno

From The Beat: You write about respect, but don't you have to earn respect by respecting others? Even though you were raised in the streets, you're old enough to raise yourself out of them now. You're willing to destroy someone simply because they have what you want? And you call that your "pride"? Why can't you go out and get a job, like the person who has what you want probably did, and buy what you want and need yourself? You've learned nothing. We just hope you don't die in those streets, or wake up when you are facing a life sentence. That's the route your taking!

From My Mistakes I Learn!

I had been through a lot in life that had taken me to where I stay today. It's painful and it hurts. Life is not easy to nobody! Life is pain and then you die.

My life had taught me so many lessons. Situations that I been through had made of my heart a cold, hard rock — No feelings; my eyes dry

They forgot how to cry

My soul had died in this jail,

Breathing slowly, staring at the wall

Not knowing why

Why you still alive?

-Diablito

From the Beat: We know why you're still alive, Diablito. It is because that cold heart has been melted by a little girl named Lavelle, and that is who you must now live for. That is who you must overcome your past for. That is who you must stay free for. And that is why you are still alive!

Streets

What's good with The Beat? You know me, holdin' it down at the Ranch, chillin' like a villain, tryin' to make a million, ya dig? But let's cut the small talk and get to the big fish...the streets.

The streets is a hard life. It's nothin' compared to the TV shows, movies, etc. The closest to it is probably the TV show called "The Wire" or documentaries about individuals who lived the life, but when you out, they're witnessing the hectic situations. It can reform your whole mind, like bein' traumatized. You become ruthless and start to create a new attitude—that "forget" it attitude, that I'm in it for self and will do all means necessary to be on top.

Shhh gettin' ugly nowadays—the one you thought who was down, loyal, true to the squad will snitch to save his own ass. So watch who you associate with. All said and done, I'm a keep it pushin'. Do time, don't let it do you...

-Chinky

From The Beat: Have the streets hurt you somehow? Did someone you trust betray you, as this writing seems to indicate? Do you feel the streets have traumatized you, changed you, even caused you to become ruthless? If so, do you want to stay ruthless, or go back to who you were before someone wounded you in the streets?

I Hope To Become A Union Man

When I grow 1 up, I will like to be in an apprenticeship program or with a union, because you get a lot of benefits in one of them jobs.

-Jo

From The Beat: What kind of work really appeals to you? Many businesses have workers' unions, so maybe you should first decide what career you want to develop, get accepted into their apprentice program if they have one, then join their worker's union.

Just Bein' Smokey

Wha's up, Beat? Man, life is crazy up in the hall. All I can say is soon as I get the hell outta here, man, I'ma do me, you know? I ain't tryna say I'ma be perfect, but I'ma just do me. I'ma be the Smokey everybody know. But that group home stuff ain't gone work.

-Smokey

From The Beat: When people write, "I'ma just do me" without any further explanation, we're left wondering what it means to do you. Are you going to "just do me" in a way that will keep you free, or are you going to continue doing the things that lead to lock-up? Tell us more... much more!

Don't Smoke

A lesson learned for me is like to never smoke in a limo then hop out and smoke come out the limo. And be a smart ass at school, then think I'm going into the prom.

The thing was the police that was watchn' wasn't really trippin' 'cause damn near everybody that went to prom before know that we just tryna have fun that night.

Plus, it not like I came there drunk, barely standin' or somethin', but the principal wanted to be a ass and did what they did.

-D-Mac

From the Beat: Well, how many times do you plan to be in a limo in your life? You may have learned the lesson not to smoke in one and then jump out, but it's not a lesson that you'll be able to put to use too often.

Joining The U.S. Military?

Nah, 'cause I'm not really into fighting for a cause, I would rather be with my family every second I can. But me being like this is basically saying, "Screw it! I'm gonna do what I want to do." But really in my mind, it's not like that. I'm just out looking for the right thing that suits me. I don't know.

-Anthony B.

From The Beat: Once again, Anthony, this is a really great beginning. And, once again, if you had just written on this one topic and developed your argument even more, this could be a piece of the week. What we like most about this short piece is that you see the similarities between joining the military and joining a gang. In both cases, you have to accept someone else's "cause" as if you had something to do with it, and then be willing to die (and kill) for it. If you wrote a whole page on how you see the "cause" that gangs fight for as similar to the "cause" countries fight for, that would make a terrific piece that we would love to read.

Now It's My Turn

What's up, everybody? Yeah, this is Nee-Nee. Yeah, I getting out tomorrow, June 25, '08, you feel me? Yeah, my lil' bra been through this, now I'm going. I can't start my life out to be like this, and when I get out, my whole life 'bout to change. I'm 'bout to go to summer school, have a job, and all the stuff.

-Nee-Nee

From The Beat: We want you to think about "all that stuff" and then write us a longer piece about what "that stuff" is. What are you hoping to change in your life?

A Rap To Impress

Listen, I'm quite known

Wit' nice chromes

Wit' cyclones

Ninja's white stone right on me

White stones glitter

The left hand bling, the right one shivers

Stallion medallion an ice cold picture

The white stone flipper

That white tone

Nice home

Getting rid of the weight like lipo, mista

This psycho sicker

That ain't crackin' ya pimp

You got a rat as a friend like Mike in Thriller

This ain't nothin' to me, a ninja at his best

No rapper could impress

Man, I'ma crack right out the 'jets

You rappin' indirect

But it's lookin' like a movie shoot

The way they sendin' all these damn actors at ma set

-No Name

From The Beat: Well, you can definitely rhyme... but we can't say we understand all that you're trying to say. Also, we wish you had taken the time to put a name to this piece. Maybe you could write an explanation of what this rap means.

A Lesson Learned

What up with The Beat? This a ninja they call Rico. Yeah, my bro's Vick and Oscar came with a really good topic this week, "A lesson learned." Man, keep it all real, it seem like he wrote this topic for me. Shhh, my lesson learned is this jail shhh is over.

To them over cook ninjas tryin' to beef and ninja ain't got no money, still beefing, getting on the bro's. That ain't good, bro. It's our time to shine on my mama.

-Rico

From The Beat: Does this mean that when you walk out of here, you're not going to be a part of the beef? How do you plan to "shine" in a way that keeps you both safe and free?

I Am Grown Up

I want to be me. I'm already grown and on my own. If I could start from scratch, I wouldn't change shhh, on the real. I'm going to be and I am an entrepreneur, just in my own way fo' real. I am that ninja and I am grown.

-Hard

From the Beat: Well, maybe you are that grown man you say you are, but we had to take out the whole last paragraph because it contained some pretty childish threats and boasting that teaches nothing and helps nobody!

Listen To The OGs

What poppin' with The Beat, dawg? Yeah man, still in the hot box, yo! Yeah some shhh I learn is life is as hard as you make it. But a ninja like me just do what he got to, to make a life easy, such as sit under the OG's, don't talk, just listen. Ain't gone tell you nothing wrong. It gone be beneficial, ya dig!

Anotha thang, you got be a beast in these streets. Me and all my homies is big dawgs, ya dig!

-Jigg

From the Beat: Listening to those with more experience than you is always important, but in the end, you still have to be the one to decide what's right and what's wrong, whatever they tell you. Those "beasts in the streets" are easily turned into zoo animals, put in cages like this all over the state. Is this what you want in life?

A Construction Worker

I want to be a basketball player, NBA, you feel me. I want to be a construction worker 'cause I work good with my hands, you feel me. And you don't need a college degree. You don't even need a high school diploma.

-Methon

From the Beat: You're right about not needing to graduate high school to be a construction worker. But, of course, if you want to be in the NBA, you do need to finish school. Even if you don't need it, we hope you get your diploma.

Military And Gangs

I say to hell with joining the US military because that shhh getting people killed for gas. Then they got the nerve to say stop gangs. But gangs got a real reason to do what they got to do. I know for a fact that it is a bigger reason than gas. Then they got the draft that make you go unless you get five years. So I say to hell with the U.S. military.

-DL

From The Beat: The government will give you many reasons why they are at war with their "enemies" (and gas will be at the bottom of that list), just like gangs will give you many reasons why they are at war with their "enemies." Frankly, we don't see the difference.

I'm Gonna Be Famous

What I want to be when I grow up? I want to be a star because a star get all the attention. And how I'm going to become a star? By getting my way on TV, like the best at something I do, like sports. Or a famous person like somebody who invented something everybody need. That's how I'm go be a star, ya dig!

-Lil' Cali

From the Beat: We believe you could accomplish this goal. Do you have any inventions floating around in your mind for things everybody needs?

Alone

25 to life ain't no joke

When you cock a barrel back and let the trigger go

In less than five seconds yo' life could be gone

Now you sittin' in a cell thinkin', "What I'd do wrong?"

Now what can you do but think all day

Got tears in yo' eyes and your heart feel pain

And now yo' days ain't the same

Nobody's by yo' side

What happened to the homies that were die or ride

Now nobody's with you

You just gone rot or die

And they cool without you

To everyone I thought was my homeboys, I solute you weak-ass ninjas.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: We hope at least one Beat reader will understand the importance of what you've written: one five-second mistake can spell a lifetime of consequences!

Get Money

When I grow up, I'm goin' to start my own magazine company like the XXL. First I'm goin to find out who knows about putting out magazines. Then, once I got my sources together, then I'm gonna put everything into one.

-Money Makin' Coop

From The Beat: We can tell you that putting out your own magazine requires many people working very hard all the time. We know that because of the magazine we put out every week — the one you're reading right now.

Thank You, Brian

Hey, this Banana. Today I met this guy. He came to our unit to tell us a story about him selling weed. They tried to rob him and they shot him in the back of the head. Damn, that's messed up over some weed. Damn, that's a miracle for him to still be here. You will be in my prayers. Keep yo' head up.

-Banana

From The Beat: We know that Brian will appreciate reading this. We wish every boy here would keep Brian in mind when they write things like, "Ride or die," because often it's not so simple as that. For a long time, Brian was confined to a wheelchair, totally dependent on others. Tragically, that comes with the dangerous occupation of drug dealing. We're glad Brian made such an impression on you.

As Life Goes On

Life the only thing that a ninja love, like me. There are a lot of things that a person can have, like video games and cell phones. Stuff like that come and go. If you break a cell phone, it broke; video games, you break, it broke.

But your life... it does not break and if you live life good then it will go on.

-Ran Tweez

From the Beat: Why do so many young people act like there's no difference between destroying a cell phone (for example) and destroying a human life? Why do you think you seem to value life more than other writers we've read in The Beat?

What I Want To Be

I want to be a successful person when I get older, maybe be a football player. But whatever I do, I want to have a lot of money, stay getting a lot of females 'cause I can't settle down just yet. But most of all, I wanna make sure my family stay safe.

-Sheldon

From The Beat: We hope you get your wish. Wanting to make your family safe is a fine goal to have, but don't you think that they will be happiest if you keep yourself safe?

Becoming A Doctor

When I grow up, I'm going to be a doctor because I want to help kids feel better when they need help, and to get their life on track and keep it on track. I also want to be a lawyer or something to help kids from getting in trouble. And kids that go to group home or juvenile. I think kids shouldn't go to a group home because some kids go crazy being in things like that. Children should be with their parent or family member. I think juvenile is wrong too.

-Antonio

From The Beat: Both professions you've chosen — medicine and law — require that you finish school with decent grades, graduate from college, then complete graduate school (three years for law, five years for medicine). That means, you have to start getting disciplined now, and not waste any more time in places like this! (If you have personal experience with kids who "go crazy" in group homes, we'd love to read about it.)

Saying Sorry Was A Mistake

One of the mistakes that I made was always saying, "I'm sorry," because people would always believe me — and I will always do them wrong. They have lost faith in what I say, especially when I say I'm sorry. Now I do my best to act instead of apologizing. Actions are louder than words....

-Revolution

From the Beat: If your words turn out to be empty, then people will judge you as untrustworthy. If you do people wrong, then people will judge you by those actions.

Seeking Revenge

Yeah, this ANT, man. This one for my ninjas, man. Me in max holding it down. Ninjas already know it's murking season and me and my ninjas hungry for them bodies, man. I just lost my young ninja, and I can't let that go, feel me Beat? I know y'all response gone be something about it ain't worth it, but how I'm feeling is like forget that shhhh. I'm on ninjas!

My whole stay in here I been cool ass shhh with ninjas. Now it's about that time for me to get out of here and to 850 so I'm on ninjas. Me and Bra gone keep it lit from the inside while my hyenas in the jets hungry for bodies. But ninjas be hiding, man.

-A.N.T.O.

From the Beat: You know, ANT, there's nothing we can tell you about your quest for revenge that you don't already know. All we can say is to think of your mother. Nobody plans to get caught (or shot), but there are more than 200,000 prisoners locked up in California alone, and all of them thought they could get away with whatever it was that led them to losing their freedom for years at a time. Their mothers are the ones left behind, permanently crippled by the loss of their sons! Think about it.

What Do I Want To Be When I Grow Up?

Me answering this question is like my hundred time. My answers have changed over the years 'cause of the situation I'm in or where I be livin' life. It's hard to say what I want to be 'cause... I don't know exactly why, but that's my answer.

-Anthony B.

From The Beat: When you write about all three topics instead of just one, you really can't put the thought or time into any of the things that you write. We don't really like pieces that are so short they don't tell us much. Next time, please choose just one topic, and write a whole page about that!

Three Topics In One

I want to play college ball when I grow up because I am very good at it. I love playing the game, and that's my dream.

My lesson learned is not to rob people over no I-pod, because it is not worth being in Juvenile Hall for two weeks.

No (women in the military) because a women could get pregnant and get hurt, I wouldn't want my momma or wife to be in the military.

-Phillip

From The Beat: Next time, Phillip, choose just one topic to write about. When you write about all three topics, you can't really say much of anything. We don't want pieces that are just two sentences long, so give us a page on your thoughts about one topic only.

My Next Move

My next move is to finish school and go to college. Being in the street ain't go pay me 15 dollars by the hour. But yeah, I am trying to get out, have a baby, be a real father and be a real man because I don't want to lose my life over nothing. I am trying to take care of my kid. I don't want the next man taken care of my kid. Or having my kid calling the next man daddy so my next move is to change my life around.

But you know I'm go still hold down where I am from. But yeah, I am about to touch down in a few, be real man and get money the right way. I'm out.

-JT

From The Beat: Being there for your child is the most important responsibility you now have. In fact, it's meeting that responsibility that will tell the world whether you have become the man you want to be or not...

A Lesson I Learned

Pull up yo' pants and let that "N Word" go. It ain't good like that all the time, fo' real. Keep it coo' with dudes sometimes. I ain't sayin' be coo' wit' him all the time, but don't mug a dude if you don't know. Just nod yo' head and say, "Wha's up." That's how you keep it coo' with dudes, ya heard me. I'm outta here.

-Fee G

From The Beat: We wish you had written a longer piece about this topic, because we like your thinking. We're particularly interested in your advice to "let that N word go," because we've been reading how some people are using that word against Barack Obama in the old, racist way, and we hate hearing it. Have you let it go?

When I Grow Up

I wanna have geeks when I grow up. I plan on finishing high school, take my moms to buy her a new house. I wanna go to college and get a degree in entrepreneur so I could start my business by selling cars like Ferraris, Lamborghinis and Jaguars. So me sellin' them hot-ass whips gonna make me and my goons rich.

But I got another idea about when I grow up, but guess what. Y'all gone have to wait till next time, ya dig.

-Tray

From The Beat: We hope you follow your dream to go to college, because it will open up many new possibilities in your head that you have never thought of before. You may decide that selling Lamborghinis isn't the best way for you to get rich. We're eager to read your other idea.

Big Dog Status

Yeah Man, I'm out chea holding it down like a big dog. This juvenile shhh ain't for a real ninja like me. I'm supposed to be out of this thang. The judge don't wanna let me out because she know what a real ninja capable of. But when I do get released, I won't see this shhh again.

-Daniel

From The Beat: Well, by announcing to the judge (in this piece) that you're capable of doing bad things when you get out, you're giving her all the reasons she needs to keep you locked up. If "juvenile shhh ain't for a real ninja," then how come we read so many pieces by "real ninjas" who are locked up there?

Doin' Good

What's good with The Beat, dog?

Shhh, I'm still up in this thang

Tryna get out and be up on the block where the homies hang

Ninjas know me, main

I'm hot like flame

Runnin' in ya end zone like a football game

Said I'ma cook y'all brain 'cause I'ma G like that

Down fo' a minute, but I'ma be right back

Nah, but what's good? I ain't feelin' them topics so I just had to spit something a quick minute. I'ma ride this time out until it's finished. Man, it's really can up in this weak-ass unit, I'ma try an' go to a different unit, 'cause it ain't poppin' in here.

But I been doin' good, though, ya dig? But these staffs need to show a lil' mo' love than they doing right now. That's it fa now 'cause these words getting' short. Chea Boom.

-Yung Canon

From the Beat: Well, we're glad you're doing good in here, even if you have some problems with some staff. We bet that when staff gets together, they complain about how disrespectful y'all can be sometimes in the units, which may contribute to staff being less than you'd like them to be. It's a two-way street.

Living For Money

I can't wait until I get out of next week because I'm getting this job making my money the good way, not like them ninjas always broke. Me, I'm not going be broke. I go be ballin'. I don't have to steal to get clothes. I got money. Money is life, so when y'all get it, don't mess up yo' life. And If you do, mess it up with money.

-Not Broke

From The Beat: We had to change your Beat name because the one you chose is not appropriate. If "money is life," why are so many getting killed over it?

What I Want To Be When I Grow Up

I have answered this question bout 20 times. And I've answered this question 'bout ten times over the past. I want to be a defense lawyer. I want to help people stay out of trouble. I would like to help people, like murder charges. I don't care what race it is, I would help them.

-Baby UT

From The Beat: If you want to be a lawyer (and we hope you do), you have to complete high school with high enough grades to get into college. Then you have to finish a four-year college degree. Then you have to finish three years of law school. So, if this is your goal, it's time to get serious.

Learned

A lesson I learned was when I came in here? I learned to listen to my first mind. When I came in here, somethin' told me not to pick up that weapon, but I decided to still pick it up. The boys was on they way. I was trippin', lettin' my mind get the beast of me, allowing me to do what's wrong.

-J R

From the Beat: We hope your first mind always tells you not to pick up that "chu-wally" because you know where it can lead.

A Lesson Learned

I'm startin' to learn one right now bein' locked up. I'm asking myself, "Do I really want to be in gangs and having my little brother want to do the same thing?" Nah, man. Me being locked up is got me thinking that it's time to step up and be a real person.

-Anthony B.

From The Beat: You have the beginnings here of a piece of the week, if you develop your ideas. We love that you're thinking about your little brother following in your footsteps. But, again, the reason it is not a piece of the week is that you did not write enough on the topic because you chose to write on all the topics. Next time, pick one!

Lesson Learned

What up, Beat? Me, same-ass shhh. I dig this topic because being confined in this place for more than a year... To some it ain't long, but to me it been long as hell!

But the lesson that I've learned is that the system ain't playing wit ninjas nowadays. Because with me and my case the courts ready to play me, dawg. But to all that's locked up, word from one of them ninjas, do yo' time, learn yo' lesson and stay out. Right now it's too many females out there and too many ninjas locked up.

Man, we got to get out. I'm out.

-A.N.T.O.

From the Beat: We're not sure you've learned the whole lesson yet, ANT. We think it's good advice about doing your time, but it's the next part — "stay out" — that has us worried, especially in light of your other Beat piece in this issue. Staying out isn't just a matter of luck; for the most part, whether you stay out or not is in your hands.

Can't Wait

Man, it's can as hell in here. Same shhh, different day. I only got nine more weeks till I get out of this hellhole. I'm really sick and tired of this place — the food, smell and all the shhh. Staff really think they're something when really they ain't shhh.

So yeah, what's good with The Beat, like I said and always say. Me, just chillin', doing time like crazy. My court date is getting closer and closer, yet time is going slower and slower. Man I can't wait till that day comes. I mean I could, but you know it's a saying. I really can't have much to say. Just keep it smooth and I'll write to you guys soon. Till then, keep it coo'. Late.

-E.B.

From the Beat: We can only imagine how your excitement must be growing as the day comes close. Just remember how much you hated in here, E.B., because if you come back (or end up in another institution), we'll have to conclude that it wasn't that bad after all. You know what got you here, so you know what not to do...

Making Things Right

Wha's goin' down with The Beat You know me, Dre Boelow an you already know though June 18th I became a father. Man, it feels good. But then again it don't because I'm in jail. But damn, I'ma be home soon to see my daughter. I'ma make thangs right.

-Dre Boe

From the Beat: We're glad you're feeling good about being a father. What really matters, though, is that your child feels good about being alive and about his parents. We hope you do "make thangs right" when you get out of here. How do you plan to do it?

Quitting Smoking

Lesson I have learned is that I should stop smoking because it's bad and I could get real sick. It's bad. And I can't focus good and learn what I have to learn in school. I would be leaving school to go smoke. What makes me smoke is that I be stressing a lot of family things.

-Cholo

From The Beat: How long have you been tobacco free? Don't start smoking again. It's not only bad for your health and your education, it's also very expensive.

Becoming A Good Family Man

Wha's up with The Beat, dawg? This Jigg holdin' it down in max. But what I wanna be when ah grow up is a good family man to my baby's mama and my kid, ya heard. It's the right thang to do, man, ya heard. I'ma get a job and do a little job on the side.

-Jigg

From the Beat: We hope you follow through on your goal of becoming a good family man. What kind of job are you hoping to get? (Make sure that "little job on the side" doesn't put your freedom at risk; your kid deserves better than that!)

A Lesson To Be Learned

'Sup with The Beat? It's my sixth time being in the YGC, and yet I have plenty to learn. Every time I've been in here, I've never seemed to learn anything. But I'm finally realizing I got to become a young man. I'm getting out soon and I hope it's my last time.

-Chris

From The Beat: We hope it's your last time getting locked up, too, Chris. Why do you think that it's taken six times before you realized that this is not where you want to spend time? Do you think it's that your level of maturity is higher now? Hoping is not enough... What's your plan for success?

Depression

Well, for all of you reading this - I'm pouring my heart out in this writing. The last two months I have been in a real bad depression. I got locked up with my best friend, so I had that. But shhh happened, and now we don't even talk.

My boyfriend got sent away for a year and my little sister just graduated from elementary school and I was not there for her. I really disappointed all my family and I just feel like my life is crashing down. So if you can give me advice on how to make my life a little better, please help.

-Cameron

From The Beat: Let us start by saying that serious depression is a condition that may require the help of professionals. We're just your regular 'helping out' kind of folks, but we have, as they say, "been around the block a few times". So, we'll make a few observations and maybe a suggestion. And if what we say doesn't make sense, just keep asking around. There are people who can help you. You just have to let it be known that you need some help. Now then - here are a few observations.

First: when you screw up, it's normal to feel bad about it. That's your 'conscience' talking to you - telling you that you've really messed up. You're supposed to feel bad if you do the wrong thing. It's one of the ways you have of telling yourself not to behave that way again. Nobody likes to feel lousy. Feeling bad, in some situations, is how you learn to correct your behavior. That's one observation. Here's another:

talking about how you feel, and writing about how you feel, is often the most effective way to deal with how you feel. Talking and writing about how you feel actually transforms the feelings. That's why, if you're feeling good - just shut up and enjoy the state of feeling good. The minute you start talking about it, you'll change the feelings. So - when you feel lousy, talk about it, write about it. When you feel good - just enjoy it. So - here's the advice, for whatever it's worth. Commit to being honest about your life, about your past. Talk about it with someone who will listen to you without making judgments, and if you can't find someone to talk with, then write about what's bothering you. Be honest and direct. Remember that writing is really like talking, but it's to yourself. It's silent talking. Also, work on accepting your mistakes. You need to forgive yourself. To move on, you have to accept and forgive. It takes faith to forgive yourself - faith in yourself. You know what's right, and you know what isn't. Make a decision to do what's right. The past can't be changed, but it does not have to be repeated. If you are struggling with an addiction, you'll need to acknowledge it and seek the help of wise people who know how to provide that kind of help. At the bottom of all of this is a willingness to be honest, to accept, to forgive, and to move on. There, that's our advice. We hope some of it is helpful. We wish you well.

Avoiding a Prison Future

Today's topic, avoiding a prison future how I think I could avoid going to prison is by not getting caught in the adult system and having violations and make better choices. I need to be smart about it and do the right thing.

-Shaggy

From The Beat: You say that you need to make better choices, but what are those choices? What kind of things will you change about your life? Can't wait to hear more from you, Shaggy.

Thinking Through The Topics

When I grow up I wanna be a make-up artist. I wanna be a make-up artist because I love doing my make-up and adding different colors to it. Also, cause I like doing people's make-up, I like making people feel pretty and beautiful.

I'm disappointed in myself because I had to learn my lesson in here. It sucks in here, but I think it was the only way to realize my mistakes, so I'm thankful for being in here - in a way - because I know that I'm gonna be a better person in the long run and think about my actions before I do them. I'm just getting a little homesick while learning my lesson.

-Cindy

From The Beat: The lesson has cost you some time, but it sounds as if you've come to some important realizations. You know what you want to do for a living, and you've come to understand what you can't do, if you want to move forward. And you're humble enough to recognize that you may have needed this 'time out'. This may be 'time' well spent.

Choices

What up Beat and Beat readers. I hope all is well and everything is going good for you despite your current situation. Well by the time you read this, I'll probably be out.

Pues today's topic - I'm going to write about is joining the military. I'm thinking about going but I'm not sure because I'm not giving up on my life yet. Usually people go there as a last resort, but I think that it's a good idea and it will teach me a lot of new things. But only time can tell. So we'll see what happens. But I doubt I will go. It's hard to leave my loved ones behind.

Beat - that's it for tonight. I'm gone. Ghost. Poof. One love.

-India

From The Beat: Hey, we thought you were gone a few minutes ago. Think many times about that decision to join the military. You can't change your mind once you're in. Be very sure it's what you want before you make that commitment. Talk to people you trust about your dreams, thoughts and ideas, that may help in coming to the right decision.

Untitled

I want to apologize, apologize for hurting you, I know I did you wrong. I hurt you so much, the pain from your heart hurt me too. I'm sorry for everything. I didn't deserve someone like you, you were my everything, my heart, my soul, I hope you forgive me for what I did. I hope in your heart you find it deep inside to understand why. Goodbye for now I'll see you around just keep your head up & know that I'm here for you.

-Alyssa

From The Beat: It's hard to admit to someone you love that you've done something wrong. You've already recognized that you hurt a loved one, and that's the first step. It's obvious that your apology is genuine. Think about what you can do when you're released to not betray that person again. What do you need to do to assure you make the right choice next time?

My Dream, My Goals

I want to be a defense attorney. Since I was young, I've always had the qualities of a lawyer. I was excellent at debating. I know when to argue. There's a time and place for everything.

Yeah, sometimes I have to swallow my pride, but I'm gonna definitely pursue my dreams. I'm gonna go to a community college for 2 years, then a University for 4 and then a law school for 3. By then I should be well prepared to pass the bar.

I love to write so I should be nothing to a boss hog like me. But yeah, then I'm gonna move back to the town, 'cause it's bootsy here, especially this county.

I'm thinking bout goin' to college down south, 'cause that's where I would fit in off top. And it's a new environment for me. Better surroundings I'll be around my brothas and sistas. But don't get me wrong, I love my Hispanic culture.

After graduation, I want to celebrate in my homeland Puerto Rico. I would like to visit Cuba, to see my dad's family, but you can't because of the dictatorship.

I'm gonna put my faith in pursuing my career the best I can. Real talk. But anyways, I'm gonna cut this short, but I will be back in a lil bit. Peace in the middle east.

-Shatel

From The Beat: Hey, there is a time and a place for everything. And if you're going to be an attorney, you'll need a good command of 'the King's English'. Which is to say, when speaking to a large audience, like The Beat readership, if you want to be widely understood, leave the patois home. You're a very bright person. So, our suggestion - when communicating to the masses, (that's us), use the common denominator of language. You dig?

Straight From The Heart

Every day I wake up it's a struggle.
I see the hustle is in my eyes. Can't escape.
I'm on the grind every day and night,
doing some thing that will ruin my life.
Up in the morning, up in the morning, up in the
morning. Gotta get up and get something.
Head to the block.
Hit the corner. Guaranteed get it on lock.

-Carenian

From The Beat: Doesn't sound like the kind of profession that will get you farther than a jail house yard. Maybe you should rethink your priorities.

Rated X

What I want to be when I grow up is a porn-star. You may ask why, but when you do, I'll just ask why not. Everybody has plans for their future, and these are mine. People always say to do something that you really enjoy and have fun doing.

This "stuff" is what I really like to do. So why not get paid while doing it. That's what I have my mind set on doing. I'm gonna be the first person from Gilroy to make it in the porn industry.

Well that's about it for now, until next time. To all up in here stay up, and do your time, don't let the time do you.

-Young-G

From The Beat: If this is what you want to be, then good luck! Be careful and act responsible while on your mission to fulfilling your dream!

I Want To Be A Counselor And Help Kids

I want to be a juvenile hall counselor. I want to help kids out and make some good money. I know where kids are coming from when they say they need something. And the job is a good job. It's mostly kick back, just posted with people you went to college with, and it's just telling people what to do most of the time, so you can teach them a lesson and show them how to be responsible. But there's times when it's hard - but not really hard, because if someone fights, you got the right to put your hands on them. But when your unit is on A level, it's very laid back. But when everyone's on C level, it's kick back too, 'cause everyone's on lock down. But all I can say is - the kids need help.

-Epa

From The Beat: True enough. The kids need help. And, as you also say - who better to help than someone who's been in their shoes?

What I Want To Be When I Grow Up

I want to be a business man, just like my dad. I want to have my own franchise of stores just like my dad's stores of photographs and videos.

Having your own work, and being your own boss, you can do whatever you want anytime, and you still making money, not like people who work for other companies. If they don't go to work, they don't get pay or they them from their work.

By having your own franchise, you have to work hard enough to accomplish what you want. My dad was being an example to me. He makes me think that I can do what ever I want to do in life.

-Son Like Dad

From The Beat: The ideas and desires are there, circulating in your head. Now, you need to put those thoughts in action in order to succeed. Everything is possible when you desire it with your heart.

Grow Up

What I want to be when I grow up is an actor. I want to be an actor 'cause people would love me and I will have a lot of money, and give to the poor. And I'll be a good role model for young kids.

-LL Cool J

-From The Beat: We hope you make it! Imagine how nice this world would be if we all had the same intentions you do.

A Lesson Learned

Well, a lesson I learned was not to use drugs on the ranch program, because that led me to run, and when I was running I broke my leg and my ankle. But the good thing was that my homies, the ones I ran with, carried me, and one got away, but that was a lesson all of us learned well. Much love and respect Beat. Alrato.

-Lil' Mono

From The Beat: Hey, how about not using drugs... period. Not just your leg, and your ankle, but your whole life would have a good shot at healing, if you kept the blur out of your brain, and focused on something worthwhile. Say, have you considered becoming a porcupine tracker? Or a star counter? We hear that's about all they're hiring 'users' for, these days. And the money's not that good.

Crazy Dreams

As I sit in my cold cell all by myself and think to myself. It hits at 9:30 and that's when my crazy dream starts, and it feels real.

I end up in a dark place where no one is around except dead bodies all around. And I look straight ahead and I see a three-headed dog that is at least 20 feet high, and it's chasing me, and I stop. But I don't know what happens next.

When that happens, I always hear the key opening my cell. I always have that same dream over and over again. What does that mean?

-Sammy

From The Beat: We don't know what that bunch of symbols might mean, but it sounds like you are afraid, and you are giving in to the pain around you. If the death and the pain around you is coming after you, it sometimes seems inevitable that you'll be swallowed alive. But don't forget that there is always hope, and it lies within you to survive and to live the right way.

I Will Be A Musician And Actor

Monique is back - everyone's favorite Mexican is back in the The Beat.

What I want to be when I grow up... more like what I will be when I grow up. Music and acting is my life. Ask anyone who has been in my unit before. It's in my blood.

I inherited my talents from my parents. My mom was a theatrical and vocal genius, and my dad, a lead jazz music vocalist. They didn't get far in the business, but I will.

I'll soon be moving to San Diego Job Corps, learning culinary arts. But screw that! I'm going to start my career down there. Playing gigs, learning guitar, auditions for both on and off stage, singing my heart out, serving coffee at a local coffee shop, writing music and learning about food - all in one. I want to do what my parents gave up on. Now its my turn!

Screw American Idol. I'd rather work my ass off from the bottom up. You will see.

-Alex

From The Beat: You sound like a very determined young guy. If your follow through is half as impressive as your intentions are, you'll do very well.

You Need To Stay In School

What up Beat and Beat readers. Well today I'm going to talk about how youngster need to stay in school.

Well my message to all you young cats out there is to stay in school and get your education because most cats be rather be hitting the pip or the blunt, instead of concentrating on school.

Instead of hitting the pipe, homies need to start hitting them books, fill your minds with knowledge instead of crack.

When I was growing up in the 'hood, all I was doing was to smoke to my done, listening to rap and oldies. Then I realized that soon, I started acting different. I started being more concentrated on my Mary Jane instead of my lady or my family.

I started stuttering when I would read, I couldn't remember much, I was getting more stupid instead of getting my knowledge, going to school, hitting on the fine hynas that went to Oak Grove, but instead drugs took me to the Hall.

Now I am getting less credits, and when I can be out there with my lady having fun and being with my family.

When I get out, I'm gonna get my education instead of blazing a blunt. I'd rather drink. Well I'm getting board so I am out.

-Chicano

From The Beat: You're right! Education is very important in life. Right now is the time when you should make the best effort in getting the best education you can, and also taking advantage of the all opportunities and educational programs provide. Don't worry about the rest. You already did your part by giving your advice. Whether they follow it through or not, it's all up on them. Focus on your education, future and life. Drinking could be worse than smoking in some occasions. Why not quit everything at once? It would be the best choice.

My One True Father

I am grateful for my one true father Jesus Christ, who has been here for me through thick and thin, even when I wasn't bearing the fruit he was seeking from me. He was still there for me when I was in need of his blessings, and that's what I'm grateful for.

My opinion of a good father is as simple as being there for a child emotionally, physically, and mentally, and I have experienced these things with the lord who has took the place of my institutionalized dad, who lacked these qualities.

So with that said, I will be grateful for my father until I meet him with a handshake in the Promised Land.

-Richard

From The Beat: Sometimes it's fair to wonder why God is referred to as a father, when fathers so often are such imperfect examples of this love. But I think you are right, a father at his best might one day be just a little bit closer to that goodness. It's good that you found it, and I hope you can be the same sort of father one day.

My Time

What up wit it Beat, it's your boy Lil Buddah coming from this the playpen. But anyways today I'm not going to write about the subject because they're weak.

So I'm gonna write about time and my sentence I thought my sentence was good for my charge. I thought the ranch was better than placement, but I thought wrong, because I got sentenced on June 6 and I got to wait like a few more months just to go to the ranch. That's all bad, but I'm gonna do my time on my head, it ain't nothing.

-Buddah

From The Beat: Well, we wish you luck in the process. Waiting, unfortunately, is a large part of it, but I'm sure you can find good things to fill the time, things that help both you and others.

I Want To Be A Probation Officer

I want to be a probation officer when I get older. I want to go to San Jose State. I want to start out being a counselor and work in the units with the kids. I want to work with juveniles because I've been through same things they've been through.

-Cuu-Cuu

From The Beat: Those are noble intentions. Get your education. If you still feel the same way after you've nailed that college degree, we bet you'll find the work waiting for you.

Nightmare

Well hello Beat machine, well today I'm gonna tell a story about a young man named Loony. He got caught back in January of '07 for a dumb reason, and 'till this day he regrets every step he took that one day.

Loony was walking to the store with his boy when out of nowhere the rivals rolled up. They mumbled something and took off. When they were driving off, Loony told his lil' homie to throw a rock at the car. The car hit the brakes and two older heads come out of the car. Loony told his boy to get ready because it was time to get down.

As Loony and his boy were approaching the Ford truck, one of the guys pulled out a stick from the back and hit Loony's lil' homie. When the lil' dude fell, Loony got mad and took off on the passenger while his boy took flight on the driver.

As Loony and his boy were fighting in the middle of the street, people had already called the cops. Loony heard the siren from a distance and snapped out of his blackout. But when he opened his eyes, Loony's victim was twitching on the floor with blood coming out from the back of his head. He got kind of spooked and he just wanted to get away fast!! He ran to the Ford truck and took off and as he looked back he noticed a car seat for a baby and he hit the brake as soon as he seen that, and 'til this day has him thinkin'. He hopped out of the truck, Loony was out and about.

Two days later, Loony was on fugitive watch and his pad got rushed. Loony has been here ever since and about to leave for good.

Loony is a new man, but you can't take the ghetto out of him.

-Loony

From The Beat: This is a dark and compelling story, man. And as much as we try to erase the past, there the baby is in the back seat. But in the end, we hope you have found a real way to move on. Not to remove your past, because it is a part of you, but to do good for yourself and for those around you in spite of that past.

What I Want To Be When I Grow Up

Hey Beat - what's up?

I'm happy 'cause I'm almost out of here - about five more week. I get out in August. I know for sure I ain't coming back!

But anyways - on topic - when I get older, even though I'm about to be 18 in July, I want to be a correctional officer in a prison. I think it fits me because I got experience from in here. But also I will be working with adults. I would want to work with them to help them as much as I can. Well, that's about it. I'm up and out. Alrato.

-Distant Lover

From The Beat: Hey Distant. Get yourself into a community college and study psychology and history and politics. Read and read and read. Find out what's been done in the past, what works and what doesn't work. Study yourself. When you know what makes you tick, you'll have a good head start toward helping others. The work you want to do is important work. You'll need to be prepared. Good luck to you.

Grateful and Father's Day

Well what's up Beat? Well me, I'm going to talk about Father's Day. Well me, I grew up without a father. So my father is my mother and my mother is my father.

To me, my mom is everything. She taught me how to be a young man and I'm grateful for that. She was there from when I was born till I was 18 years old. She put a roof on my head, so she is everything to me.

I thank God for blessing me with my beautiful Jefita Linda. I miss her a lot, but soon I will be home with her. I never met my dad and I don't want to. To me, he is a stranger and that's what he'll be till my soul leaves this Earth.

'Till then, to all, much love and respect. Keep your head up and never fall. Alratos.

I am my mom's little mistake down by the lake before she cut the wedding cake, haha.

-Shorty

From The Beat: Your mom sounds like an amazing person, doing the job of two parents. We hope you can do for her as much as she does for you, and we wish you the best going back to her.

One Day

Well one day I woke up happy as hell. I was in such a good mood I was thinking to myself nothing will get me down.

I walk into the court and wait to be called up to talk to my public pretender. So I'm waiting then this foo' calls me then he said, "well the DA is not tryin' to drop your charges and the only recommendation is alternative for 12 to 18 months, so we're just gonna continue it and sentence you then."

Then that's when it hit me. I just realized, another year and a half of my life is gone to the system because I just got done with doing a year and a half. So now I don't really care but I guess I could work with it.

Well my times running, good luck. Late.

-Mullen Jr.

From The Beat: We're sorry about your bad news, Mullen. A year and a half is a long time, but now that it's set, we hope that you can find a way to work with it, like you suggested. If you can find ways to make your time helpful, productive, fun, or at least not terrible, that will help you get through it and pass the time more quickly. Stay strong and begin today to prepare for legit living, it's the smartest thing you could do!

Should I Or Shouldn't I?

Hey, what's cracking Beat, well this be Sleepy from Santa Clara. Well, I really don't know what I'm gonna do when I get older. I'm still thinking pretty much, haha. I'm still trying to think about what I'm gonna do right now.

Right now I'm going to the group home. It's okay, I'm not tripping, I pretty much haven't learned my lesson, but maybe one day I'll learn I guess, haha. Well, they have to send me out of my county because they know that I will run. They did not let me go to the ranch for some reason. I just want to get out of here. Most my family is locked up, my primo is in here and my prima I love them and would do anything for them. Well I know when I get out and if I run from group home I'm going to Las Vegas with my homeboy and we are going to the party, haha. Well 'till I tell my next story, much love and respect.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: We honestly don't know what running will get you. It may be fun for a little while, but if you lose the chance to do long-term good for yourself, your family, and your friends, then it just makes things worse. Figuring things out isn't a bad thing, but doing the same things over and over won't help.

My Poem

I don't think I belong here
I belong outside, with the homies drinking beer

I need my lady,

Or else I go crazy

Without my girl,

Hell becomes my world.

I need my family, yes I miss them

Being locked up, don't know where why, can't understand.

I can't stand it anymore.

If only I had the key to my cell door,

So I could get out, released and be free.

Go home to my friends, and be with my family.

But for now, all that is a dream.

My unit, my cell, is all I'm able to see.

Getting to the point of almost insane.

Same unit, same routine, just different days.

So I put the blanket over me

And see nothing but darkness.

In sleep I'm free. In the streets I'm heartless.

-Paul

From The Beat: Being locked up and away from friends and family can be really, really frustrating. But don't give up that belief that things can get better. But don't be afraid to learn from your dreams. Don't stop yourself from pursuing that freedom over heartlessness.

My Plan

What do I want to do when I grow up? The first thing I want to do is to pass the system. After that, try to graduate high school, then get a job to help out my family.

While having a job, I'll be going to community college to make more money, and while in college try to study to become an engineer.

Finally, I would want to marry and have a family at the age of 20 or 20 something, 'cause I want to support my wife and show her I could support the family and make good money, not dirty! Then enjoy life to the fullest with my family.

-Diep

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a very good plan laid out there. Sometimes everything doesn't work perfectly like we intend, but you've got a much better chance of getting what you want if you know exactly what that is.

Party I'm Out No Probation

I get out soon, with NO probation. Hell yeah. PARTY TIME. I'll be 19 in a few months. It's about time. Just want to say to all the girls, the youngsters, don't make this a habit. Trust me, it's hella boring here.

All - do what you got to do. See you on the outs. Be good. I'm gone thanks Beat. LLLAAATTTEEE.

-Bernadette

From The Beat: Don't party too hard. You've spent enough time out of circulation.

Mechanic

When I grow up I want to work with cars. My passion is cars and girls. I want to work with classic cars from back in the days. When I was younger I always helped my dad with his 64 Impala. Ever since my dad told me what to do with cars, I always liked cars. That's what I want to be when I grow up.

-Lil' Blacky

From The Beat: Mechanics often get to work with the coolest cars, and make a very solid living, too. If that's what you love, go after it. You'll be surprised how far that passion could take you.

A Lesson Learned

To The Beat. I learned my lesson because I've been here too long and I don't want to be here, so I'll stop coming and I'm gonna go to the ranch so that's another reason not gonna come back 'cause I'm gonna try to just take care of my family and hang out with my homies so I learned my lesson that's what you can say, alright late Beat.

-Armondo

From The Beat: That sounds like a plan, Armondo. We hope you do the best for yourself and for them. As for hanging with homies, be sure they are down to see you do right, and not wrong!

About me

Hey I'm Kevin and I'm in the Hall with my homies because we jumped some kid for his stuff and this is my first time in here. I hate it in here because my family is out there having fun without me and I'm missing everything when I'm in here.

My brother got locked up because he broke into a house, and my older brother was locked up for some bullet in the backyard, and it wasn't his and now they want to take my family away from me.

-Kevin

From the Beat: It sounds like family is an important aspect of your life. Just be careful what messages you are taking from the other members of your family. We doubt your brothers want you to have the same types of times locked up as they did, just aswe're sure your family will want you back having fun with them.

My Things To Do

Hey what's up Beat! I went to court today and I have to wait another three weeks to go back. That's bullshhh. I've been in here for a few months. Well I'm not feeling today's topic so I'm gonna write my own, here it goes.

When I was out I didn't think I was going to come back. I had plans to kick it with Chino when he'd get out of the ranch. I was planning on going to San Jose City College. Now I'm back in here doing nothing, just wasting time. I haven't seen my other homie in days and hopefully he passes the ranch and gets out and kicks it. I already miss all my homies. I wish I would've gotten out today because I would I would be posted up at the park playing handball. Just keeping the place safe. I just want to get out, eat some good food, and kick it with the homies. Alright then Beat, this homie is out. Alrato and stay up!

-Victor

From The Beat: Keep your hopes up, Victor! It's such a disappointment to not get out when you thought you would, but try and use this extra time positively if you can. Focus your frustration on trying to do the right things, and think about what needs to change so that you don't end up here again. We're sure your friends (and family) miss you a lot too, and that's why learning how to change your life so you don't get locked up again is of the utmost importance right now, otherwise it's living the incarceration life. Wake up!

My Dreams

Its funny how my dream make me feel when I'm on the outs... my dreams don't really affect my life. But when I'm backed up in here (the hall) my dreams are so real. I have replays of how I used to be with my ex-lady, all the laughter and love we used to share. Even though it hurts to dream of her, she's the lesson why I keep doin' better in my life to show her I don't need her in my life.

-Raymond

From The Beat: It's great that you have the motivation to change your life. Make sure you're taking those steps for yourself and not just for her. You don't need a girl in your life to help you do better, you can achieve that by yourself. Let your future with out her be the motivation for your success, not just proving your ex wrong.

An Ugly Story

Once upon a time there was this one ninja from the hood in California

This ninja was from a hardhitting block and he did not take shhh from no one.

He killed ninjas and saw friends and family get killed too.

He had a baby and got locked up in and OUT of jail, it seemed like.

One day he tried to change because he did not want to see his son grow up and get locked up or killed on the block. So when he got out from the pinta, he did good,

he said no to drugs, and he put down the pistols.

His son was a gang member already looking forward to seeing his father ridin with him. His father didn't and his son shot him because he thought his father was a coward.

THE END.

-J

From The Beat: What a nasty ending! Hopefully this isn't a true story. It's sad that the father could successfully change, but still fell victim to that lifestyle anyways when his son took on his old ways. What if this twisted in a different direction? We hope you have courage to walk down a better path too!

The Military

Hey, what up Beat, well my topic for today is about joining the US Army. Well, basically, if I was drafted to the army, I probably would fight, but not for the country, for my people the Mexicans. 'Cause once the Americans and me kill the Iraqis, it's gonna be all good, 'cause like that they're not goin' to bomb North America. But not that just once everything is settled between America and Iraq, I'm gonna unite all my Mexicans from Mexico and South America and we are goin' to take over the USA.

-Lil' Sizeut

From the Beat: We wonder at what you believe military force can do. Justice can only come through agreement, not a gun. If you want to unite your people, give them the power to speak for themselves, like Caesar Chavez and Martin Luther King Jr. did. There's thousands of thugs with guns, but only a few real leaders.

Being Grateful

I am grateful every morning, because every day is precious. Just being able to open your eyes, because some people aren't given that chance. There ain't no telling when you're leaving.

-Chivo

From The Beat: You're right, Chivo. Sometimes we get so caught up in the little stuff that we forget how wonderful life is.

A Mess Of Dreams

My dreams one day that I will not mess up and keep coming in here, and be with my baby and my little girl.

I had a dreams last night, me being with them, going to the park and playing tag with my little girl, and when I tried to tag her I woke up and looked around my room guess what happened?

I was here, looking at the room, looking lost, in my room, trying to find a way to get out of here.

-A Young Dad

From The Beat: Make that dream of not messing up a reality. Be careful. You can be in the park with your daughter and your girl if you think positively and make good decisions. Think about how to make your family's life, as well as your own, a good life. What can you do to get there?

Against Same Sex

What's up Beat this is Elmo coming from the best unit. Today's topics are all right, the one that caught my eyes was same-sex marriage. I think that's not right because I was raised in a conservative household. I'm firmly against all that but for some reason girl and girl is very different thing you know. Man and man is too much that's just not right. But at the same time it's their life, not mine, you know.

Well thank you for your time Beat I appreciate it.

--Elmo

From The Beat: Same-Sex marriage is a controversial issue, and each person is entitled to his or her own opinion. However, we encourage you to explore further the reasons why same-sex relationships rub you the wrong way. Is it because it's different, or something you're not used to? Is it simply because your parents raised you to think that it was wrong? It is always very important to investigate your internalized beliefs and challenge them, and make sure that you form your own educated opinion about things.

A Police Officer

When I grew up, I wanted to be a policeman, but I became a gang banger, because my parents came from South Central L.A and, I started to have lots of problems.

That's it homie alrato. Your homie.

_Smokin Lil Shadow

From The Beat: You still got time to switch back to what you wanted to be. When we are young, we make many mistakes. Now is the time to make big changes for the better!

Taking My Freedom For Granted

Orale pues! This is that Smiley coming at you once again. Wel the lucky lil' topic today is about lesson learned.

My lesson learned is not to have life/freedom granted. You know what I'm talking about 'cause this shhh takes to damn long to get over quick. Simon (Yeah) I'm physically and emotionally prepared for this tiempo (time) that they try to hang me with.

Chale, peep my huge file before you "system super heroes" try to fade me significantly without my cooperation and good thing.

I'm actually going to keep my mentality of being good when I get out 'cause by now if I haven't matured to the point to do, so then I would have flipped the script!

To those out there that know me, keep your heads up to the sky! Smile now smile later out!

-Smiley

From The Beat: Are you smiling or crying now? How are you going to do better, if you still got the same mentality of representing and backing up your familia? Obviously, you're not talking about the familia who is at home. You're talking about the familia that got you in here and turned your life upside down. What are you proud of? Just curious!

Going To The Ranch

What's crackin' Beat this is Indio coming from this unit. Well I think the ranch is going to be fun even though I'll never be there! But hella homboys tell me it's coo there! Well the only thing I'm tripping about is if I'm going to run from there? It is hella tempting but I think I'm not because if I do, my PO is going to send my ass to CYA. and I don't want to go there yet! Well that's it Beat, 'till again!

-Lil Indio

From The Beat: We're curious to see what you actually think about the ranch when you get there! If you can keep your optimism up, that's a good thing, but don't underestimate the system, it gets old quickly, to say the least. And one more bit of advice—don't try and run! It's definitely not worth the risk, and the consequences of trying something like that could destroy your chances of getting out and going home as soon as you can. Be smart!

A Lesson Learned

What up Beat? This be Negro showing some love. Today's topic a lesson learned. I learned that is not to fail EMP.

Damn, I did months on it, and failed. I also was going to school. Wait, I got in a fight at school and got kicked out two days before court. That also contributed to my EMP being failed.

Well a lesson learned. I won't and don't smoke bud anymore and choose how to walk away from fights.

Well now of this moment, I'm going to the Ranch 6-8 months. Damn, lesson learned.

I want to be a counselor for JH, so I can help kids just like me or become a P.O so I can help kids.

-Negro

From The Beat: Now you know the consequences of your actions. Now you know what to do and what not to do. If you don't finish the Ranch, they may send you to another place with more time over your shoulders. You don't want that. Do you?

Thinking Of Someone Special Lately

For some reason I've been thinking of my ex, but I don't know why I have dreams of him. His name comes out when I speak, but I thought I finally got over him. But these dreams and daydreams just come to my mind, as if something happened to him. I try not to think or the worst, but ever since I had that dream it just brings me down. I haven't the slightest idea why, but I pray for the best.

I pray that someday we can look each other in the eye, like the day that we thought we had fallen in love with each other. It's hard not to think of the worst when you know the love of your life can be dead. He left for the infantry in the army, which is the first row that gets shot at. I pray to God that he'll be ok.

-Beatrice

From The Beat: We hope he'll be OK too. We hope all the soldiers come home soon. It's normal to be concerned about the people you love. So when you find yourself getting carried away with worry - stop, and say to yourself - "This is normal, but I can't do anything about it. So I acknowledge my worry, and I will move on now, until the next time that I worry." This may sound silly, but it is part of what it means to be a conscious human being, someone who is aware of what is going on, inside, and outside, of oneself. Try it.

Punishment

I think that punishment only works with some we get locked up and this is our punishment a to some people it works both ways.

Some people are used to being locked up some people would be scared and not want to come back.

Well this is my first time being locked up.

To me it's nothing, it's just a waste of time, but this is some kind of punishment, but it doesn't really seem to work

juvenile is hella packed and people are coming back (in and out) a lot of times.

Well I don't think this is a good punishment.

For some people they come here and they seem not hard as they thought they were,

for others its just a way of life the only thing the system does is keep them off the street for awhile and they know

there going to come back as they think of more ways to do things smarter.

-Goofy

From The Beat: Though it's easy to see that juvi doesn't work for a lot of people, it does work for some. Could it work for you if you let it? Do you want to come back? Tell us more about your thoughts on this.

This Guy, My Love

This is about a guy that I loved so much with all my heart and I still care about him 'till this day.

I was with him for about 10, 11 months.

I remember the day we first met, it was the end of April. Me and my girl went over to his house because my girl was talking to his brother so when we got there he was really shy, so I started talking to him and we were choppin' it up. We got along fast, as the night went on I realized that he was the sweetest guy I ever met. So that night we kissed; his kisses were sweet.

The next day I called him, but he was being a typical guy, not really wanting to talk to me. A few days later I went to his house. It was May 7 the day our love began. I will never forget the first day we met, the smile on his face, or his voice, or his laugh. I miss you.

-Alyssa

From The Beat: Good for you that you've found someone that makes you so happy. We're sure he misses you too, work hard to stay out so you can be with him. We want to hear more from you next time. What is it about him that you miss?

I Like The Beat Within

What's up Beat! I love when it comes to Thursdays here. The reason why is because I get your book. That's the one thing I read.

I've been here since February 9th 2008, and I have never read a book 'til this very day. The only shhh I'm interested in is The Beat, so I love Thursday nights.

I just been chilling day by day in this unit. I'm number thirty on the Ranch list, so that means I still have about some months 'til I start my 6-8 month program.

When I get there, I will already have one month of credit. If I do a perfect program, I will be out in a few months.

I'm trying to do it 'cause this is my first time in here. It's like they sentence me for a year from all the dead time.

So yeah but if I'm not, screw it life will never be fair.

-Javier

From The Beat: And we love to be appreciated and to receive writings from all of you. We are happy that you like what we do. Remember in order to receive, you also need to give. We can see the desires you have to complete your program. We hope you do your best in getting out and continue searching for positive things that can help your life.

Taking Responsibility

What's up Beat and Beat readers. Well today's topic I'm gonna write about is being responsible. Well obviously we all have been irresponsible. Que-no?

I've been and made hella irresponsible choices and I have also made responsible choices too. It's hard for me to make responsible choices when I have a childish mentality, or some things that you may thinks are irresponsible I think it's not. Everyone is different and we all make different decisions.

It's time for us to start getting our shhh together and start making responsible decisions, ending up in places like this is being irresponsible. It's time to get educated and go good in life. You can still do what you do, but be wise about it. Well that's it, until next time I'm out stay up. Much love and respect.

-Jessica

From The Beat: Think about the times that you acted irresponsibly. How can you learn from the choices you've made in the past? It's clear that you want to make more responsible choices. What are steps you must take to get educated and be where you want to be?

Just Waiting

Well what's up Beat. How you've been? As for me I've been firme (firm). Well these past days have been firme just chillin'.

I'm just still waiting to go to the Ranch because I been here for a few months and it's all dead time which means my time hasn't count jet.

It's all firme (gravy). I ain't tripping.

-Lil' Bones

From The Beat: You should be tripping. While being here, you are wasting time of your life that someday you will wish to live it right.

This Girl

There are some girl that blows my mind. She tells me stuff that I don't know what to believe. It makes me happy when she tells me that she loves me, but it seem I heard that words be far.

So I don't know what to believe. She gets me so hypnotized that I fall for her, but I think she is a fake she don't know what I want.

I want a perfect most caring and thoughtful lady, so now I think I should leave or should I stay, but my heart is telling me to go.

I love her so much that I don't want to, so I think I'm gonna listen to my heart and hope it takes me where I should go and do well with that perfect girl. Well that's all Beat 'till next time, got to go.

-Lujanrile

From The Beat: This is a risk you will have to take. Whether she's right for you or not, you will have to find out by yourself. If you think she's the one, go for her. Think about your situation you're in. Take care of you first before you pull another person into your life.

Once Upon A Time

There was a youngster that grew up tough,
committed to the block
chillin' with the homies and smoking on blunts
and oh yeah homie you can't forget them stunts
once upon a time homie yeah that's what's up.

I'm coming out the cuts.

I'm that baby who learn how to work
before baby could crawl
sippin' out the bottle wit' my lip slumped
hittin' up my ribies like homie where you from?

This was back in the days when

I was young and dumb

Livin' life as a "G" wit' my feeling numb

Hittin' up parties to get at females
was the thing to do boxing with these haters
'til my knuckles turned black and purple

going down the wrong path

fast with no clue

living life in the fast lane

telling parents lies just to get out or something
but as the story goes on life starts to change quickly
starting to get caught up by the cops

seeing my moms cry

homies dying living lies

once upon a time

now in the present just trying to get by

I gotta go Beat lates hope you like!

-Lil' Man & Smiley

From The Beat: It seems like you're tired of living the life you were living before. If that was the past, what's in the future? What are your plans? What do you want for your life? What do you want to be? Life is not a game. If you know how to live it, you will enjoy it to the fullest, filled with happiness and accomplishments. You two, think about it. Good flow!

Mi Vida Ha Sido Muy dura

Yo les quiero contar sobre mi vida. Mi vida ha sido muy dura y muy desafortunado.

Desde que era muy morrito, le llebaba en pandillas y he sufrido mucho. A veces me tocaba dormir en las calles cuando los homies no me daban quebrada en sus casas.

Ahora que tengo donde vivir desgraciadamente es aqui. Le doy gracias a Dios porque me cuidó. Quizas si estuviera afuera no estuviera con vida.

Mis padres ya mo hubieran entendido las razones por las cuales seguía en las pandillas. Ahora si llego a salir de aqui, me voy a olvidar de todo rancor. Yo no quiero ser un víctima más como a mi major amigo (Moco). El fue una victima de pandilla y por eso estoy aqui, porque quería vengar su muerte.

Si algún día salgo de aqui, voy a dejar esas pendejadas de andar de rencoroso porque en realidad todos somos hermanos. Deberíamos de parar de peliar porque todos nuestros padres son Latinos.

Ojalá alguno de todos lo que estan aqui, se pongan a pensar que ya no debemos andar en pandillas porque hacemos sufrir a nuestros madres, todos los demás, y a nosotros mismos. Ojalá todos los homies cambiaran.

From The Beat: Se nota que has vivido una vida difícil la cual te ha marcado mucho la vida. ¿Cuales fueron las razones por al caul estas en pandilla? ¿Te forzaron poniendote un cuete en la cabeza? Creemos que dejar que la vida cobre la vida de tu amigo. Es la mejor decision que puedes hacer. Con la venganza no se logra nada, no traerá a tu amigo a vida. Piensa como alejarte de la pandilla antes que termines muy mal.

My Life Has Been Very Hard

What I want to share about my life. My life has been very hard and unlucky. Ever since I was a little kid, I've been into gang and I have suffered so much. Sometimes, I would sleep on the streets when my homies wouldn't let me stay in their houses. Now I have a place to life and it's a shame it was to be here. I thank God for taking care of me. Maybe if I was on the outs, I wouldn't be alive.

My parents never understood the reason why I was in gangs. Now, If I get to get out, I'm going to forget about my grudges. I don't want to be another victim like my best friend. He was a victim over a gang and that's why I am here because I wanted to revenge his death.

If I get out some day, I'm going to stop doing stupid things because in the reality we are brothers. We should stop fighting because we are sons of Latinos.

We hope some of these guys who are reading this, think over this to not be into gangs because all we do is to make our mothers suffer, the rest of the people and even ourselves. I hope all my homies change.

-Anderson, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's noticeable that you have lived a hard life which has marked your whole life. What were the reasons you got into gangs? Were you forced? We believe you should never forget your friend, and make that the mission to do better with your life. Revenge doesn't solve anything neither, and it will not bring your homie back. Think about making a change before it is too late.

...all we do is make our mothers suffer, the rest of the people and even ourselves.

Una Historia De Terror

La historia que voy a contar pasó en Mexico, en el estado de Michoacan. En el pueblo de donde vivíamos, para cruzar al otro lado del pueblo, teníamos que pasar por un sementerio, el cual la gente decía que cuando pasaban por en la noche, asustaban. Decían que se escuchaban que alguien se quejaba una vez y otra vez. Yo les creía porque yo aveces pasaba por ahí, y no escuchaba nada.

Mi padre decía que era verdad porque el lo escucho cuando venía del trabajo en la noche. Eso me dio miedo y mas cuando pasaba por ahí.

From The Beat: ¿Y que fue lo que realmente pasó ahí? ¿Sabes todita la historia? Gracias por contarnos esta historia tan temerosa.

A Horror Story

The story I'm going to share happened in the state of Michoacan, Mexico. In the town where we used to live, in order to cross to another town, we had to walk through a cemetery in which people say weird things would happen at night. People would say that they would hear a person grieving from pain over and over. I didn't believe them because I would walk through there and wouldn't hear anything.

My dad told me that it was real because he would hear it when he would come back home from work at night. After what he told me, I got scared and especially when I would walk through there.

-Manuel, San Francisco

From The Beat: Scary! What really happened there? Do you know the whole story?

Cuando Sea Adulto

Cuando sea adulto, quiero tener una vida bien agradable, que no me falte nada y sobre todo estar con mi novia que la amo con todo mi corazón.

Sé que algún día lo entenderá el motivo por el cual estoy aqui. Estas son cosas que le puede pasar a cualquier adolescente.

Cuando salga de aqui pienso ir a la escuela, y no seguir en cosas malas. Por las personas que más amo, trataré de cambiar y seguir mis estudios y ser feliz con mi morra toda la vida. No quiero seguir haciendo cosas malas, para no volver aqui.

Le pido a Dios que me de sabiduría para no volver más a la calles.

From The Beat: Si quieres vivir una vida agradable y feliz, tú mismo sabes lo que tienes que hacer. Una cosa más, estas son las cosas que le pueden PASAR a un adolescente, pero que ande en MALOS PASOS. No a todos.

When I Become An Adult

When I become an adult, I want to have a nice life, not to miss anything, and be with the girl I love with all my heart.

I know some day she will understand the reason why I am here. This is something that can happen to any youth.

When I get out, I'm planning to go back to school and not to do bad things. For the people I love most, I am willing to change, going to school, and be happy with my girl. I don't want to continue doing the same thing to never come back.

I ask God to give me the knowledge I need to never come back to the streets.

-Anderson, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you want to live a happy and nice life, you know what you have to do. One more thing, these are the things that can HAPPEN to an innocent youth, especially those who are in wrong paths. Not all of them.

Lo Que Le Pido A Dios

A mí lo que más me duele es que no puedo estar con mi novia ni con mi madre. Todos los días le pido a Dios que me cuide, que cuide de mi familia y a mi novia quienes son las personas que más amo aunque los hago sufrir.

A ellos no le gustan que yo esté aquí encerrado a mi tampoco me gusta. Siempre trato de hacer las cosas bien. Ustedes saben que nadie es perfecto en este mundo.

Ahora trataré de que todas las personas no me miren como un criminal sino como un ejemplo para los demás.

Le doy gracias a Dios por cuidarme y por apartarme de todo lo malo.

A todos los homies les quiero decir que ya dejen de andar en pandillas y todas esas tonterías que andan. Solo piensen cuando hacen algo malo que donde vienen es a la pinche juvenile.

From The Beat: ¿A quién le va a gustar ver a alguien a quien uno quiere encerrado en la juvenile? También tú tienes que buscar la forma como cuidar a tu familia no solo Dios. Agradecemos tu consejo y esperamos que más de alguno escuche tu consejo. ¿Cuales son los planes para que tus cosas salgan mejor? ¡Piensa en eso!

What I Ask God

What pains me most is not being with my mother or my girlfriend. I ask God everyday to take care of me, my family, and my girl who are the people I love the most even though I make them suffer.

They don't like me to be here locked up and I don't either. I always try to things right. You know nobody is perfect in this world.

I will try to do right so people won't look at me like a criminal but a good example for others.

I thank God to take care of me and for helping me avoid badness. To all my homies, I want to tell you to stop being in gangs and all the mess they are in. Think where you are going to end up when you get caught doing something.

-Anderson, San Francisco

From The Beat: Who would want to see someone we love in jail? You also have to look for a way look out for your family not just God. We appreciate your advice and we hope more than one listens to your advice including yourself. Think about it.

Lo Que Mas Me Duele

Lo que más me duele de la vida es estar aquí adentro porque el tiempo que pasa aquí adentro es tiempo perdido.

Si uno se pone a analizar el tiempo que pasa uno aquí, uno se da cuenta de lo que va a pasar, que si va a seguir haciendo lo mismo o si vas a cambiar.

Hay veces que me pongo a pensar que si no estuviera aquí al saber donde estuviera. A lo mejor estuviera muerto o estaría en las calles tirado en algún lado.

Por eso le doy gracias a Dios porque estoy en este lugar aunque no es bueno estar aquí. Prefiero estar aquí que estar en lo mismo que hacía.

From The Beat: ¿Estas hablando por experiencia? ¿Estas analizando muy bien cada paso de tu vida? A veces las cosas pasan por alguna razón. Esperamos que esta experiencia te ayude a hacer las cosas bien. Aprovecha!

What Hurts Me The Most

What hurts me the most is to be in here because all this time is wasted time.

If you start to analyze during thee time you spend in here, you will realize what will happen if you continue doing the same and if you are going to change.

Sometimes I think about where would I be if I wasn't here. Maybe I could dead or thrown anywhere on the streets.

That's why I thank God for being in this place even though is not a good place to be. But I rather be here than doing what I was doing.

-Juan, San Francisco

From The Beat: Are you speaking from experience? Are you analyzing every step of your life? Sometimes things happens for a reason. We hope this experience help you to do thing well.

Este Lugar

Lo que he aprendido de este lugar es que cuando sales, quieres hacer lo mismo. Yo tomo este lugar como un lugar de descanso. Esto para mí son mis vacaciones porque aquí me siento bien. Afura tienes que hacer un monton de cosas.

Me gusta aquí aunque no estoy con mis camaradas, tal vez algún día vaya a salir de aquí para seguir con mi vida loca.

No me arrepiento de mi vida es mas me gusta como la llebo. La neta es que no sé cuando vaya a salir de aquí pero no me importa.

Pienso pasarmela bien aquí. A lo mejor si estoy afuera me dieran un bajon con un cuetazo en la cabeza y aquí no corro ningún peligro de esos.

Mi madre se preocupa porque también sabe que aquí estoy bien.

Estar aquí estos años pienso disfrutar comiendo mucho todos los días. Cuando duermo todo el día, me siento bien. Pienso escribir toda mi vida para que me ayuden con mis cosas. A veces me parece que no puedo con tantas mamadas que he hecho.

Espero que entiendan oda mivida sin tener que pasar por ella. Como dicen los tucanes, "aunque la carceles son para los hombres, afuera vivies mucho mejor."

From The Beat: Entendemos que aquí te sientas mas protegido, pero queremos que entiendas que no puedes vivir la vida en este lugar. Si segues pensando de esta manera, vas a hacer tu vida en una cárcel. Sigue la frase de Los Tucanes, que es mejor. Esto no es vida.

This Place

What I've learned from this places is that when you get out, you want to do the same thing. I take this place as if it was a place to rest. This is like vacation to me because I feel good. On the outs, you have to do a lot of things.

I like it here even though I am not with my friends. Maybe someday, Ill get out to continuing living my crazy life.

I don't regret anything about my life; instead, I like the way I am living it. The truth is that I don't know when I am going to get out of here and I don't care.

I'm planning to enjoy it in here. Maybe if I'm on the outs, I'll get killed with a bullet in my head, and in here I am not in risk.

My mother worries because she knows I am here.

Being here these years, I'm thinking to enjoy it and eat a lot. When I sleep all day during the day I feel good. I'm thinking about writing all my life, so it can help me with my things. Sometimes I think I won't be able to handle life because of all the things I've done.

I hope you can understand all my life without having to live it. Remember, "even though jail is for men (who do wrong), it is better to live on the outs."

Sebastian, San Francisco

From The Beat: We can understand that you feel sage in here, but we want you to understand that you can live your whole life in this place. If you keep thinking like this, you will live the rest of your life in here. Follow what Tucanes said. This is not a life.

I'm thinking about writing all my life, so it can help me with my things.

Mi Vida

Mi vida ha sido muy dura, pero la sigo pasando. Estoy orgulloso de mis padres porque siempre siempre han estado conmigo. Siempre me han dado el calor de un padre.

La razón que estoy aquí es porque me acusaron de algo que nunca hice, pero ni modo. La vida es así. Tengo la esperanza de que algún día voy a salir y hacer lo que algún día les prometí a mis padres y a toda mi familia.

From The Beat: No te des por vencido lucha por salir adelante. No dejes que esta experiencia te perjudique tu vida. Aprende de este error y no lo vuelva a cometer.

My Life

My life has been very hard, but I'm still living it. I am very proud from my parents who have always been with me. He has always given me the warmth of a father.

The reason I am here is because they are accusing me I did something I didn't do, but o well. Life is like this. I have the hope that I will get out one day and do what I promised my parents and my whole family.

-Walfre, Marin

From The Beat: Don't give up and fight to succeed. Don't let this experience mess up your life. Learn from your mistakes so you won't do them again.

Mis Pensamientos

Yo en mi futuro, deseara ser un buen futbolista porque es mi deporte favorito. Trataría de ser lo mejor que pudiera.

La primera lección que he aprendido fue cuando entré a la cárcel. Me sentía tan solo, deseaba hablar con mis padres y no lo podía hacer.

Me sentía tan solo porque no tenía quien me visitara, ni a nadie quien me apoyara. No sabía que iba a pasar conmigo. Me decían que me iban a deportar para mi país. Yo no quería que me deportaran porque para llegar a este país, sufrí mucho.

Mi consejo para la juventud es que no los involucremos a hacer cosa malas proque estar preso es lo más feo que he pasado.

Que Dios nos bendiga y nos guarde. Dios es amor.

From The Beat: Esperamos que llegues a ser la persona que realmente quieres ser. ¿Qué se tomará para que puedas ser esa persona? Esperamos que esta lección te enseñe a hacer las cosas como deben de ser. Ser un jugador de football es una buen iudea. Puedes ser rico y famoso.

My Thoughts

In my future, I wish to become a football player because that sport is my favorite. I would do my best I can.

The first lesson I have learned was when I first went to jail. I felt alone, and I wanted to talk to my parents and I couldn't do it.

I would feel very alone because I didn't have anyone to visit me, neither someone to support me. I didn't know what was going to happen to me. They would tell me that they were going to deport me back to my county. I didn't want them to deport me because to come here I suffered so much.

My advice to you all is not to allow someone to get you into bad things because being locked up is the ugliest thing I've lived.

God bless us. God is love.

-David, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you to become the person you really want to be. What will it take for you to become this person? We hope this experience help you realize what you really want in life. Becoming a professional football player is a good idea. You could be rich and famous.

El Dolor De la Vida

En la vida se sufre mucho dolores desde que uno está pequeño. A mi lo que me causa dolor es cuando alguien le quiere pegar a mi madre o a mis hermanas. Eso me da mucho coraje.

Cuando tenía 15 años y estaba en Honduras. Yo era muy chico. Yo miraba cuando mi padre llegaba borracho. Entraba a la casa y lastimaba a mi madre, y a mis hermanas. Cuando yo lo miraba que le pegaba a mi madre, me daba rabia.

Una vez llegó mi padre borracho, mi madre estaba en la cosina, y mi padre entró y quería golpiar a mi madre yo estando ahí con mi madre. Me sentía nervioso y en ese momento yo tome un cuchillo y se lo puse a mi padre. Le dije qe dejara a mi madre en paz y que no la fuera a lastimar porque el era hombre y ella mujer.

Le doy gracias a Dios que en ese momento no pasó nada y mi padre se fue a su cama a dormir. Cuando se lebanto le pedi perdón y me perdono.

Lo que me da dolor es que lastimen ami madre.

From The Beat: Sabemos que lo que hizo tu padre fue algo malo, que no estaba bien. Hicistes bien en haber prevenido algo; pero al mismo tiempo, fue arriesgoso. Pudistes hab er creado una tragedia. Usar un arma como defensa, puede ser muy peligroso, hasta puedes ser herido con esa misma arma. Hay otra formas como solucionar las cosas. Lo bueno fue que no llego muy lejos.

The Pain Of My Life

In life, we suffer a lot of pain since we are young. What pains me is when I see someone trying to hit mo mother or any of my sisters. It irritates me.

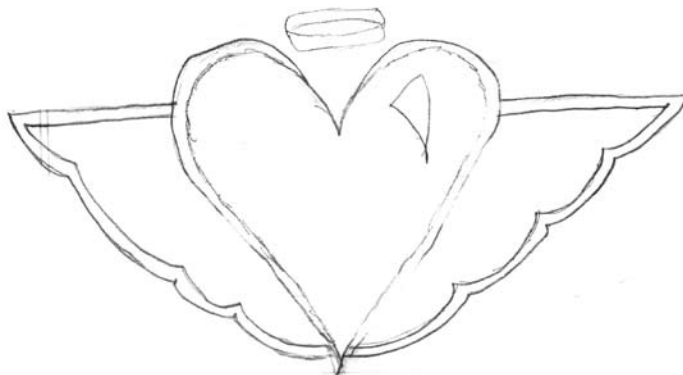
When I was 15 years old, I was in Honduras. I was very young. I would experience watching my dad when he would come drunk. He would come home to hurt my mother and my sisters. When he would hit my mother, I would get mad.

One time he came drunk, my mom was in the kitchen and my dad came in there and tried to hurt my mother while I was there. I was nervous, took a knife and I threatened my dad with it. I told him to leave my mother alone and not to hurt her because he was a man and she was a woman.

I thank God that nothing happened and my dad went to sleep. The next day, I asked him to forgive me.

-Freedy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We know what he did was wrong, and it wasn't right. You did a good think by preventing him from hurting your mother; yet it was risky. You could have created a tragedy. To use any type of weapon in a situation like you had, could be very dangerous because you could have gotten hurt with the same weapon. There are other ways to handle things. Good thing about this was that it didn't get to far out of hand.



To The Beat

I find that once one has been there done that we are inspired to open our eyes and mind, to achieve advancement. I myself have been utilized advancement. I myself have been utilized in the past. Now a new tune plays and I'm determined not to watch history repeat itself.

One must address the viewpoints mentioned above.

First open our EYES! I say this for it is obvious that generation after generation the young are lead into far worse situations due to their upbringing and left with a lack of guidance. The youth are no longer brought up with morals and values.

A lot is due to broken families. A mother that raises her children fatherless, is likely to watch her children search for substitution of the father he needed. I know this 'cause I was that child and now I've got four children ages 12, 9, 7, 4, left with the life I lived. Without their father, more importantly a daddy all of them know, love, and most of all need. So I'm here to share, with my eyes open and for you to understand that I may be locked up physically behind steel bars and concrete walls.

My eyes have seen their share and this is why I want to get the message out, that change is possible. It has come to a vital statue where society has obviously kept their blinders on. I say this cause I've seen the years fly by without change. It's like this though, if society took the time to voice the fact the outreach such as The Beat Within needs more recognition and help being funded. Many fail to see with the blinders on, that there are a lot of men and women behind these walls. That have lived it, done it, and don't want to see the young repeat it. I myself truly dig the fact that The Beat Within makes it possible, for my voice to be heard though I'm still waiting on a response from y'all.

I'm going to put it in the Lord's hands and if I'm to be an edition to opening the eyes of the youth. Then as I shared when I first wrote, you'll hear from Playboy Ant, with a lot of versatility in my step. I got a heart fueled to open the eyes and ears with wisdom to inspire the young to better themselves and succeed in life

Secondly, open your ears; with this said this is a two way street meaning. I hear everything, as our eyes have been opened and now our ears are left with feelings. You need to hear what you read and feel what the writer is expressing. And what I dig about The Beat Within is hearing the tune that plays and they respond with some real game for us writers. So it is important that we listen to what's said. I'll tell it like it is, myself, 'cause I don't want you to follow the path I did and wind up with tattoos to show for all the years spent locked away. 'Cause that's all I got.

Open ya' ears to this. My family and loved ones, and I'm not talking about the homies, I'm talking about the ones who have always believed in me. The ones who still to this day live the life of a 9 to 5 and family time. They still uplift me and inspire me to do right. And all I do is continue to hurt and let them down. Now I hear my tune as it plays for you and as I express it's helping me to see and hear the truth of why I've failed all these years. So with the help of The Beat Within and all of you, I believe I can change too.

Third, open our mind is exactly what all of us are doing and I hope we all search are selves out with a mind to change. Now it's time for me to close in hopes that I'm able to reach at least one person this week with the assistance of The Beat Within, until you hear from your boy again. Striving to change, your boy, Playboy Ant. Everything I send is one time written, straight to The Beat Within.

Our next writer is writing from the correctional institution, Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA. Our friend Anthony is new to the publication. He just started submitting his work to us a couple months ago, but he's already has shown us a lot of hard work, determination, and heart. He writes with one prime purpose and that's to reach the youth out there. He doesn't want them following the path he took so he's pouring his soul into his writing to try to get them to walk a different path. So please give Ant a read and listen to advice he has to offer.

Now it's time for me to close in hopes that I'm able to reach at least one person this week with the assistance of The Beat Within...

A Memory Not Forgotten

There's no more keeping it hood
 And look act you, your the one that's no good
 I remember that night in July never to be forgotten
 All 'cause you wanted to make a name
 You attempted to smut me up and tried to take me out
 the game
 I remember when we was young
 I put hands and feet on you and make you run
 Your cowardly actions were to throw bricks through my
 Gandma's windows with 15 other fools
 Way back then you couldn't keep it hood
 I should of known you would always be no good
 Years then began to fly
 As many men like you I grew up with
 Stabbed me in the back while I was locked away doing
 time
 I gave you a chance and I kept it real with you
 And I return this is what it came down too
 Because of your dope fiend actions
 Having my baby mama and kids in g-rides
 And you trying to take my bro Mo out the game
 With a clip that rang three bullets show the scars
 But far worse you did it with my baby mama
 Out of respect Mo let it ride
 Until I was released in June of '05
 So it was personal when I heard what you did
 I didn't grab heat nor did I need a knife
 You remember that night you looked in my eyes
 I said "Peek a Boo" and you screamed like a girl
 Didn't anyone jump you
 It was all me, my hands and feet
 Yeah you got whooped, you got beat
 And you couldn't face word that quickly spread toward
 and in the streets
 So you got the inside scoop and you crept
 The thing is you did it while my baby mama and kids
 slept My sister-in-law was in the bathroom
 And I was putting together the new bed
 I heard a bang on the door so I went to look
 There you stood with the gun
 My daughter and son who called you uncle
 Watched as shots rang to take my life
 And the pain feels me inside
 Is my children will never forget that night
 By the grace of GOD he let me live
 The truth is I can't forget
 I will forgive in hopes that you get right and open your
 eyes.



The Bizz

What's the biz and what it do beat it's Playboy Ant getting at you this week with this game for everyone to absorb. First, good looking on the publication in vol.13.24. It's official and ya' boy wants everyone to know that I'm truly with "starving for betterment." So I'm going to continue to bring some heat to the beat fore all and the readers out there. This afternoon when I got my copy of vol.13.24 I let my boy E-ru know about ya'll. When ya'll hear from him it'll open some eyes. The boy got the key (know ledge) and he's only 26 yrs. of age doing 25 to life.

I heed to those younger and older. I hear my boy on some real stuff and I'll confessed the other night he was on the back wire in Tracy prison H-wing. He was saying some thing that made me realize I need to truly be about change, cause right now all I am is 15 in the way. Think about it he's doing 25 to life, and I'll be getting out next year. I've got another opportunity to do right when I get out.

Ya' know what he said though "I'm doing life and my lil' brother changed his life around and is living it. All I try to do now is reach at least one person so they don't wind up like me." That's what he said. I believe that he will touch many and the Beat Within will put him on line with all ya' readers. So keep an eye out for my boy E-ru from Sacramento. And I pray that he's able to inspire a life of change striving for betterment.

I'm Grateful To The Beat

It has come to a vital point where we must view our failures in the past. The fact is propaganda self-gain, with a strong mind, to plant seeds has only been imbedded with poison. This is for opportunist who pray for the opportunity to gain control. In order for one to advance it should be perfected ad a will to do so, not because your told to. I find that as my mind explores the past and see as you do that I want to break the cycle first for me, my kids, my family and all of you. So first I'm with you all that I'm able to share my mind, that while I share I'm able to workout more change within myself.

I'm grateful to breath, for the wisdom and knowledge, for being blessed with everything I've got. My kids, my family, and the opportunity to be apart of The Beat Within. I'm grateful to share everything with you readers. As I mentioned above many are being drug into the lies and deception of representing a color or even worse racially influenced to believe your racial/ethnic is superior, then all other races. All of you are being influenced and brain washed to hate.

So I ask now are you going to put your so-called homies or race before turning against everything you're grateful for? Cause you're already turning your back on your family and love ones. Do you know it's always going to be you answering to somebody or letting the next man tell you what to do? I ask you to think before you decide to rep a certain color or a race.

Be you, do you, and be grateful to those that stay true for what you choose to do. I got to get this out in the mail tonight until the next time. Stay focused on striving for better. Stand solid and firm on ya' own two feet, keeping a strong mind, body, and soul.

Oh Father

I stand before you today, as filthy as I am in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth... Please forgive me for all I've done that is contrary to your love, for I've done wrong to others and myself...

I thank you for your forgiveness; I thank you for you excepting me as I am... Right now.... I open my heart to you, and I ask that you Lord come into my heart by your Holy Spirit... Today I take up your armor....(Ephesians 6:13-20) the helmet of salvation, my breast plate of righteousness, my feet prepared in shod, with the gospel of peace, my belt of truth, my shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit... I love you father... and on behalf of me and my loved ones, and everyone's life I've touched, I smash, demolish, and confuse all of Satan's lies, schemes and snares he has attempted today before us...

I remove all obstacles from our paths and my doorways that may be open, that the enemy and his army may be using to attack us... I pled the blood of Jesus upon these doorways and I claim for those doorways to be forever sealed, for all eternity... I claim victory, over the devil, and over this trial, and all trials, in the name of the King.... In Jesus name

Oh Lord, may each and everyday of my life be compelled, and led by your Holy Spirit, and may I never, ever be misled, by myself, nor the enemy for I am your child father... I pray in the mighty name of Jesus Christ... Amen....This prayer goes out to everybody that's incarcerated and all those who are not incarcerated and are still heading down a very destructive path.

Larten Alexander

My grandma, she been the foundation of my family for a long time. When my mom used to drink, my grandma used to take us kids away and tell my mom, when she got her act together, she could come pick us up. My mom used to buy a 12-pac and drink the whole thing in one night. One beer would get her drunk. She would always overdo it. My mom, she don't drink much now—she only drink a 40 now, at one time.

I used to go to my grandma' work at the St. Francis (hotel) every time my brother was mean to me. My brother was mean to me all the time. I didn't even know my grandma' name. When I was eight or nine, I used to go to my grandma' work and ask the lady at the (hotel) desk for my grandma, but I didn't know my grandma' name, so the lady at the desk would ask me, "Is she (my grandma) older than me?" I would say, "Yes." Then the lady would shop me around the hotel to see if I could find my grandma. By the end of the day, I would find her. My grandma would be, like, "You back again?" And I would be, "Yeah, I'm back again."

No matter what I do, she never get mad at me. When I wanted a \$100 pair of shoes, I'd go down to the hotel and ask her for them. She'd say, "Come back tomorrow," and I'd come back the next day and get 'em.

I just went to my grandma' house yesterday. Right now, if I run out of food, I go to my grandma' house and pick up food. It seem like she don't have financial problems. It seem like she can make a penny stretch. She never make me feel bad if I'm hungry. Yesterday she gave me pizza and a bottle of water. Every time I go visit her, she make me eat. Like, if I go over there, she say, "I got some watermelon. You want some watermelon?" I say, "No." She say, "I got a banana, you want a banana?" I say, "No." She never make me feel bad, even though she do so much for me.

When I was fifteen, she took me, my oldest brother Snoop, and my other older brother, Duck, to Disneyland. And then we went to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. We had fun in Louisiana. That where all my family at. They had a house for the kids and down the block, on the same street, they had a house for the adults. When we left the kids' house, it looked like a tornado hit the house. We always had fish fries. It was fun.

One year my grandma took us to LA. The next year she took us to Orlando, Florida, to Disney World, and we stayed in the Disney World Hotel. I went there, my grandma started laughing, because when I went to get a hamburger, they charged it to the room and gave me a credit for the hamburger, and when I told my grandma they gave me the credit, she started laughin'.

Brian Seals used to be a "gangster" doing what a lot of you do — making his money in the drug trade. One day, a "customer" robbed him and shot him in the head. He barely survived. After significant brain surgery, living for months in a wheelchair, rehab. — and a lot of pain — Brian is back, only this time he's trying to reach out to those doing what he was doing to. Try to make them see that some consequences are forever. He thought nothing could touch him, and he was wrong. Now, he wants to touch you, before it's too late.

At the Disney World hotel, we stayed there complementary. Everywhere we went, we stayed there complementary, because my grandma worked at the St. Francis for forty years, and the Western Union branch that owns Disney World, also owns the St. Francis, so we can stay anywhere Western Union own, complementary.

Then, when I was about nine, we was traveling, and I started actin' up 'bout Alabama. My grandma said, "Don't you know they hang people here?" I don't remember what I did, but I was unruly, fo' sure. We were in the airport in Alabama and she gave the stewardess my ticket for the plane and told her when I stop acting up, to give me my ticket and put me on the plane. My grandma got on the plane with the rest of the family and the stewardess put me on the plane when I calmed down. My grandma kept asking me to tell her why I was actin' up. I said, "I don't know."

We flew to Louisiana and when we got there, I got bit by fire ants, and this is one of the reasons I love my grandma so much. She knows how to make little things big.

She told me, "P (for Sweet Pea), always save your last dollar. Never spend your last dollar." Even though I spend it, I do listen to her. I do hear her.

She just gave me \$20. My grandma, she got a lot of money, but she don't spend her money. In her closet she got fancy clothes that make your eyes pop out. She says, but she never wear 'em.

My grandma, she a Jehovah Witness. She hold Bible study at her house every Tuesday night from 7:00 to 9:00. She a Jehovah Witness, so we can't celebrate birthdays at her house. I only had one birthday party—one for me and my two brothers at the same time, in her basement. I was probably fifteen. My one brother was seventeen and my other brother was twenty. We had a whole lot of toys on the wall. My older brother had the first pick of the toys, my next older brother got his pick of the toys, and I got all the leftovers. It was a good party, though. I had blue bubble gum ice cream and my brother had rainbow sherbet. I think my other brother had strawberry. That's the only birthday party I can remember, but it was the funnest party, 'cause I knew it took a lot for my grandma to do it, because she's a Jehovah Witness, and that's why it was special to me and I remember it.

Now I know my grandma' name. It is Larten Alexander.



A Playa's Position

Ya' boy Skum is drastically mackish
 The anti-thesis of a hater is me
 To Lerant, understanding, anything
 but insecure, and judgmental Look,
 'Cause I'm coo' with your situation
 'Cause I got patience like plastic
 surgeons
 I suggest you don't understand this
 understatement
 I'm out to pull you in my life
 regardless of who's wife you is
 Remember, I'm just a playa stating
 his position
 Whether or not you take it is his
 problem and yo' business
 Female
 I've emptied clips like alcoholics
 empty fifths
 Little to give, a lifetime to sin
 A little too late to loose my ways
 Quit baking cakes and win
 I'm finn'
 To loose my mind
 You crush, I grind, you floss, I shine
 You got my brain like cocaine
 I think it's cooked
 I'm hooked like all the time
 I make my way wit' little reward
 Little regard for those I harm
 Including ya' man, ya' undastand
 By the way, why ya's breaking his
 heart
 You think I care?
 I'm one who shares
 I'm one whose nature's that of a playa

Our next writer comes to us from Pelican Bay State Prison. He's a veteran Beat writer but he hasn't been in our latest issues. Ray always delivers masterpieces of word play. He's a young writer facing a very long sentence. Ray has been through the juvenile system just like a lot of you writers out there, so his credibility is authentic. He delivers a lot of raw and uncut writing. So give him a read folks!

I'm not committed, you's his woman
 You broke yo' word to cheat on
 pimpin'
 How you gonna be mad at me and try
 to act innocent
 You don't play wit' pits you don't
 know 'cause they might bite, right?
 So why lie wit' "dogs" and get mad
 when we don't act right
 It's in my genetics to find fine women
 I didn't make her break her
 commitments
 'Sides, if she's after my faction,
 perhaps it ain't that I'm the problem
 Perhaps you's just slackin' in yo'
 mackin' and yo' mouthpiece ain't
 solid
 I'm romance poor
 Look at the man whose heart you
 took and shook
 Yukmouth done said it best
 Broke ninjas make the best crooks
 He best look, ova
 His shoulda before I take you over
 Hold ya like a holster holds weapons
 Dirty and hot
 I could RIP my chest
 Worthy or not, I need yo' flesh
 Burn the spot up when we sex
 Now you want me to be yours?
 You lost yo' mind, you out yo' gourd?
 What's so different from before?

I'm genuine,
 Like Ginuwine
 So it's hard for me to find
 A faithful woman wrapped in lies
 Where you tell him
 Where you at
 When I'm wrapped
 Up in yo' thighs?
 Look at his back, it's filled wit' knives
 What's to stop you from stabbin'
 mines?
 He might fall for your mouthpiece
 But I'm the one who cultured all yo'
 lies
 Yadi my scheming?
 You can't play fair while cheating
 So how you gonna fly wit' me while
 you clingin' to dead weight?
 I ain't hatin'
 Do you, Boo
 Just don't be pissed and switch on
 me when your seduction falls limp
 I find your credibility to be solid as
 mist
 And don't act like I led you astray to
 come yo' butt
 I ain't no threat to him; he aint no
 threat to me
 You's the only common factor
 And I refuse to be victim to a
 mackstabber.

Rap's Rape

Seems to me the rap game's been raped
 By crates of foo's
 Gaping wounds
 Rip her rep
 Got her chest wet, like a T-shirt contest
 And street cred's been hit
 Like clips to heads
 Vibrant red left, like periodical lips, fed
 Up
 Wit' lame ducks
 Spittin' contamination
 Rims, gems, wi-men, pimp, cups, so sick of
 Monotony, you's rottin' these minds
 Wit' cliché rhymes
 To the point where I don't need a psychic predictor
 To pee-write
 Yo' lines
 Avoid yo' entrapment, like fat chicks avoid them salads
 Temptin' as it might be to murder-rap, and be a savage
 Watchin' as you murder rap, and somehow be livin' lavish
 Sellin' junk food
 To bunk dudes
 Who ain't eva was raised by factors
 Livid 'cause the actors

Got hand-me-down stories of ghetto tragic
 Bandanas and tattoos do not a sav-gangsta make
 The will to survive and the balls to risk it all
 Is why us gangstas take
 It's what leads to massive word play
 Like dictionaries on a swing set
 The vocabulary equivalence of vets, wit' bullets in a hot
 tech
 I could rip yo' neck up, to ketchup, wit' one mic
 And leave a hot mess
 While you claim to be a convict
 And duck convictions when you con-fess
 Like peanuts and corn kernels,
 We been in some serious shhh
 And to watch you cheapin' it, rape rap, and rake in some
 chips
 Is like watchin' punks get paid in weight to rape up my
 chick
 I can't take it no more!
 So you gonna have to take this clip:
 I could verbally abuse wit' truths, and fuse
 Herbal metaphors, point 'em at yo' gourd
 Knock out a friggin' tooth, and put you on the floor
 Do it all wit' one verse
 Save rap, and put you in a hearse, trick.

To Whom It May Concern:

Whatever you do, do whole-heartedly
 I mean, even Yuk said that if you gonna do it, do it right.
 Right? "It" can be a relationship, a job, a drug program,
 etc. Whatever "it" is

Put your soul into it and make it your own
 Whenever I write, I make sure there's emotion involved
 I leave a piece of myself on paper every time I lay down a lyric
 And I stay as true to my own experiences as possible
 I don't talk about hella ice because I never really was froze
 like that

I never owned zz's and whipped hella scrapes
 I never owned a key or murked hella dudes
 I keep true to how I did 'cause I really ain't tryna impress you
 I'm just trying to express how I've felt in situations you
 might relate to

Did I have thangs? Yeah
 I had a gold grill and a gold dally
 I had a Grand Nash on 18" Irocs

I carried a pistol, sold dope
 But those material things didn't make me
 Neither does my past make me who I am
 Rather, I am what I choose to do with the wisdom gained
 from my past experiences,

Whether they do mistakes or not
 It kills me to see young folks pimp themselves out to the
 mainstream definition of what a gangsta is
 Spittin' 'bout rims and murders, pimpin' and dope dealin'
 Y'all really think no one gonna see through the smoke you
 blowin? I mean, like candy, that braggadocio is coo' for a bit

But you get sick of it
 It's hollow and weak
 And sooner or later, someone will call you on it
 Better to give it up now than to fully embrace that false
 bravado and get smashed on by a real killa
 That goes for everything you do in life
 I mean, isn't worth being rejected every now and then
 If it mean you'll be embraced for who you truly are one day?

Why Do We Cry?

Why do we cry? Perhaps our eyes need to be washed by our
 tears once in awhile so that we can see life with a clearer view
 again. So when you feel the need to shed a tear or two, don't
 hold back because in the end you will only gain something
 from it... a clearer vision. After the storm follows sunshine.

To the Beat Within

What's up, Beat? What's good with y'all? Well, first off let
 me introduce myself. My name is Johnny, AKA Raskal G,
 outta San Diego, CA. I'm doing time at Folsom State Prison in
 Represa, CA. My good friend Bron'shi Jackson, as y'all know
 him, put me up on The Beat Within. He stays a few cells down
 from me. We always talk, chill, joke around, etc. Anyways, I
 told him I like writing poetry and reading on my free time, so
 one day Bron'shi asked me to read one of my poems. After
 reading it, he suggested I write to you guys and send a few
 lines of mine. So here I am, The Beat Within. I hope y'all like
 my poems.

These poems and letter I write straight from the heart. So
 if y'all ever want more poems or anything, please feel free to
 holla at me. I'm here to help guide the youth or anybody to
 the right way in life. It's never too late to change; never give
 up, homies. Everybody makes mistakes in life, but we gotta
 learn from those mistakes... or do you want to learn how to
 be a prisoner, an inmate, or a convict? Let's use our heads!
 Think before we act because every action has a reaction...
 stay positive no matter what the situation is. There's a light
 at the end of every dark tunnel! Thanks for yall time.

Much More Than Words Can Say

Sometimes it's hard to put my feelings into words.
 But I want you to know that not a moment goes by that I'm
 not thinking about you,
 wondering what you're doing,
 wishing I can be with you
 and counting the days until we're together again.
 Sometimes when I'm with you,
 I don't let you know how special you are...
 And how your love means more to me than anything else in
 my life.
 I may not always tell you,
 but I want you to know...
 I love you much more than words can say...

JOHNNY

Johnny, AKA Raskal G, has been introduced to The Beat by our
 mutual friend, Bron'shi Jackson. He sends his introductory letter and
 some very expressive writing from Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA.
 Raskal is not shy on sharing his opinions and his out take on life itself.
 Welcome aboard, Raskal G!

Feel My Pain

Living life behind these walls ain't easy
 It's so hard to find a girl in this world that can please me
 Ain't it funny how breezies go from loving you to hating
 you?

Homies to phonies, fakes to snakes, females to
 heartaches
 Life is sink or swim, but I'm submerging in the deep end
 Ankles attached to shackles, trying to survive in the pen
 Memories still hurt me when I think about all the pain
 and struggles I been through in life,

But I gotta have faith and hopes because only God
 knows the truth,
 So forget what the world thinks
 Instead of seeing one rise, haters would rather watch
 one sink

I wish I can say I'm living my life happily,
 But this stuff's far from reality.
 My mom's working two jobs just to survive;
 I'm like a major disappointment in her life.
 Sometimes I wanna cry,
 But there's no more tears to shed
 So I drop to my knees and pray every night before I go to
 bed

I pray for God to show me a better way
 I pray for better days
 But it seems like even God doesn't hear me sometimes
 So who do I believe in?
 Holla if you hear me,
 But I ain't Tupac
 Tell me where do I go from here?
 Prison life is messed up!
 It seems like you're out of sight, out of mind;
 It's hard when a Ninja doing prison time...

Begin Today

So brief a time we have to stay
Along this dear, familiar way;
It seems to me we should be kind
To those whose lives touch yours and mine.

The hands that serve us every day,
Should we not help them while we may?
They are so kind that none can guess
How soon they'll cease our lives to bless.

The hearts that love us, who may know
How soon the long, long way must go.
Then might we not their faults forgive
And make them happy while they live?

So many faults in life there are
We need not go to seek them far;
But time is short and you and I
Might let the little faults go by.

And seek for what is true and fine
In those whose lives touch yours and mine;
This seems to me the better way
Then why not, friend, begin today.

Living Epistles
I am my neighbor's Bible;
She reads me when we meet.
Today she sees me in my house,
Tomorrow on the street.

She may be relative or friend
Or slight acquaintance be;
She may not even know my name,
But she is reading me.

I am my mailman's Bible;
He reads me every day.
What he puts in my mailbox
Shows who o'er me holds sway--

It may be by my letters
Or magazines I read,
But he can tell my character
By things on which I feed.

I am my children's Bible;
They read me every day;
The way I dress, the way I act,
And by the things I say.

They know whether I am sincere
E'en though to church I go
In love's obedience to God,
Indeed my children know!

Guard Your Mind
Be careful what you think.
Shun every evil strife.
Because one thing is certain--
Your thoughts can run your life.

Wherever dwells the mind,
The eyes and ears go, too.
What you see and hear
Affects the work you do.

Keep your thought-life pure,
Take captive each wrong done.
And in the name of Jesus,
The victory is won!

This next amazingly prolific writer/artist needs no introduction as he's been blessing the pages of our magazine for quite some time now. Herbert Schweigert writes from Crossroads Correctional Center in Cameron, MO with intentions on spreading his political views and offering some words of advice for all you readers out there. Herbert is an OG when it comes to putting in it down in our pages so give Herbert a moment of your time get ready to read some good game!

Lord Send Me

So send I you--to labor unrewarded,
To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown
To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn, and scoffing
So send I you--to toil for me alone
So send I you--to hearts made hard by hatred
To eyes made blind, because they will not see
To spend, though it be blood--to spend, and spare not
So send I you--to taste of Calvary
So send I you--Lord, here am I! Send me!

God's Will

I know not by what methods rare,
But this I know: God answers prayer.
I know not if the blessing sought
Will come in just the guise I thought,
I leave my prayer to Him alone
Whose will is wiser than my own.

My First Love

Throughout my life, for many different reasons, I have never felt completely accepted. I've never been a part of anything, never felt that deep connection to another person. No matter how many people I surround myself with, all my relationships, be they familial, friendly, or romantic, remain superficial, and I am lonely. A survivor of child abuse, rape, and prostitution.

I was born and raised in the inner-city ghetto slums, Detroit, MI. and the South Bronx projects, the very heart of New York. It was here that I came to know the only woman who always accepts me, never accused me, and loves me unconditionally. She asks only to be loved and respected in return.

I've learned at an early age that no matter what ills I suffer at the hands of the world, I can always return to her. She caresses me with long blades of grass, delicate flowers, and feather-soft leaves. She cradles me in moist earth, allowing me to shed my tears, as a breeze whispers comfort to my trembling soul.

She welcomes me just as graciously when I have a smile on my face, embracing me in cool lake waters, leaving a warm kiss of the sun upon my cheeks. With her, I am never lonely. In her arms is the only place I feel truly safe. In the midst of a concrete jungle, I have only to walk through Central Park or look up at the sky to feel her presence. Each moment I am separated from her, I long to be with her, even more so confined in this drab, cruel prison cell 23 hours a day. She is the air I breathe, the plants that nourish me, and the water of life that wets my lips. Without her, I don't exist.

Someday I hope to find a woman of flesh and blood to spend the remainder of my life with; someone to love and be loved by. Someone to share my world with, walking down wooded paths together, sleeping with nothing to cover us but a blanket of stars, and surrendering ourselves to the chill of a mountain stream. But no matter how intensely I feel for her, that love can never surpass the depth and strength of the perfect love I feel for Mother Nature.

True Nature

I have a constant ache for Mother Earth, so burned, depleted, burdened, pierced, and raped by those who lack the sense to know her worth.

The activists seem weak, a little draped, and can't protect her water, soil, and air from ghastly, greedy, guzzling, global glitches or corporation rapist-billionaires.

It hurts to think of landfills, oceans, rivers, ditches, replenished constantly with trash and toxic waste, and city dwellers sick from cars and smoke.

To know that even boatloads full of cash, with good intentions, sink or spill their cargo like a bad joke.

Then how can one begin to do their part? The answer lies, friend, in purity of heart.

I encourage prisoners in jails, juveniles, and prisons to "write" and tell their stories to the people.

Wonder

We all have wondered more or less
 Why this or that must be
 Why some of us find happiness
 That others fail to see

Why some of us are lifted high
 And lead throughout life's role
 While others even though they try
 Can never reach their goal

Why some can meet the tempter's wrath
 And find the strength to stay
 Upon the straight and narrow path
 And never lose their way

While other's walking by their side
 Will try to beat life's game
 And wander off where paths are wide
 That lead to sin and shame

And oftentimes when death draws near
 With sickle grim and cold
 To reap the life of someone dear
 The young as well as old

We'll hear the question asked by some,
 If all of this is just
 If life is worth the struggle from
 The embryo to the dust

We ponder over many thing,
 But here we'll never know
 The reason for the happenings
 That mystify us so

But when earth's scenes recede and we
 Respond to Heaven's call
 We'll see things then as God doth see
 And understand them all.

Revolutionary Prison Activism

One thing that has become absolutely clear to the U.S. government and the prison industrial complex (financed and motivated by capitalism and imperialism) is that prisoners are incorporating a revolutionary political ideology into almost all prisons in this country, if not all of them. The government has used a variety of methods to suppress the storm clouds of revolutionary activism inside these prison slave plantations, but they can only kill "us," not our ideas.

Circumstances throughout prisons' history has compelled captives to openly express their newfound consciousness through a variety of internal and external outlets. The internal struggles range from violence to organizing political study groups to encouraging anyone who desires change to be afford the outlet to seek such change. Some other struggles may consist of creating revolutionary "people's libraries," which can give anyone seeking knowledge access to them. The external struggle begins with getting a direct line of communication with grassroots organizations who are engaged in exposing the politics of prisons and the inherent abuse taking place. I encourage prisoners in jails, juveniles, and prisons to "write" and tell their stories to the people. In so doing, we each create a human chain linking prison activism with street activism, making it one struggle--this is happening all across the U.S. as we speak.

The great thing about prison activism is that when prisoners (in all institutions of incarceration) become aware of their rights, and those that are being violated, many of them will challenge/expose the corrupt or inhumane actions of their slave plantation masters. The backlash to prison activism is being targeted by the slave masters for long-term isolation. This isolation can involve placement in control units, censorship and destruction of our mail, and materials of revolutionary content being confiscated or scanned before being deemed allowable. But none of this should deter or stop us from telling the world our story through our political expression through the pages of The Beat Within and other publishing firms. Our bodies are held and confined to these cells, rooms, and dorms, but our words and ideas can never be restrained unless we want them to be.

Prisoncrats, Juvenilecrats, and Jailcrats across this God forsaken country realize that the conditions that we each oppose here are degrading, cruel, and dehumanizing. Only superficial changes are made to give the illusion that they are capable of addressing the problems we say need fixing. But the only real changes that are made quickly are those that enhance security, strengthen repression and benefit the control mentality.

As revolutionaries, we must each continue to encourage political activism by keeping our doors and hearts open to the plight of prisoners held in all of the U.S. slave plantations that are genuinely doing something to change their lives and the prison slave plantations themselves. The struggle on the inside is forever forged together. "Dare to struggle. Dare to win," as cited by ex-Black Panther chairman Fred Hampton, Sr., who was assassinated by the police and F.B.I. on December 4, 1969.

"Revolutionary consciousness is the only real hope for those oppressed by the system. Without the cold and desolation of winter there would not be the warmth and splendor of spring! Calamity has hardened my mind and turned it to steel!"--George Jackson

Unavoidable Rebellion

When prisons and other institutions to incarcerate human beings are built across this vast capitalist country, they often bring new employment to a rural white community. Those civilians who are employed to maintain security are easily stressed out by the day to day complication of trying to run a slave plantation. The newly employed are also poorly trained, if at all, in how to facilitate conflict resolution, and the fact that many of these employees were mentally disturbed when they were hired in as well as mentally retarded. As a result, many prisons have had their share of strikes and riots.

In modern American history, there have been three major waves and one ripple of prison disturbance. The first wave occurred from 1929 to 1930 when there were eleven major prison uprisings across the nation. The second wave started in 1952 and ended in 1955. Riots in this period were more widespread and costly (as were the Michigan Prison riots in early 1981) than those were during the Depression. During these four years, there were forty-seven major prison rebellions that resulted in considerable loss of life and property damage in excess of 10 million or more dollars. The last major wave was from 1968 through 1971. During this period there were forty major disturbances, including the historic insurrection at the Attica Correctional Facility in upstate New York. The ripple of prison disturbances that took place from 1981 to 1991 witnessed only a few significant events. Of these, only one, the 1987 Cuban immigrant riot at the U.S. penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia, was serious.

Placing these four surges of prison insurrection in historical perspective illuminates the politics of imprisonment in capitalist America.

From the insurrection of the 1960s and 1970s American prison officials became aware of the serious threat to the American prison system posed by politically conscious/unified prisoners who identified themselves as "the new revolutionary man or woman." Many prisoners of these times (and even today) were conscious of the racist politics of imprisonment in America. They then could see what we each see now-- the national minorities are over-represented behind the iron curtain and understood all too well that their position in

society accounted for that disparity. The revolutionaries on the inside rallied around figures like Comrade George L. Jackson (and other activists) who even today remains a source of powerful thought-provoking debates and activism inside and outside of these institutional walls. His most influential books were *Soledad Brother: the Prison Letters of George L. Jackson* (published in 1970 and circulated widely) and *Blood in My Eye* (published posthumously in 1972). The murder of Comrade George by California's racist Prisonrats inside the slave plantation of San Quentin State Prison on August 21st, 1971 set the stage for the most political and bloodiest prison uprising in American history. Additionally, eight hundred prisoners fasted at Attica prison in a silent protest/memorial to Comrade George on August 22nd, 1971 following his murder. Super-maximum prison and control units were the state's response as they learned to suppress prison slave plantation riots.

I encourage you, brothers and sisters, wherever you're incarcerated to never drop your guard, no matter where you are. Our struggle is one that requires perseverance, relentlessness, determination and heart. This is not to say that we won't have our bad days--we're human, after all. The objective in all of this is to never stay down too long, always pick yourself back up, shake and brush yourself off, and embrace a new day.

As revolutionary-minded men and women, and this also involves the youth in juveniles and detention centers across America, regardless of our nationality, we can all use a motivational push sometimes. We can't simply wait to see if the slave masters of these institutional slave plantations are gonna do the right things or not. Comrade George said, "Action establishes the front." We must never be afraid to take action, however and whenever necessary. Revolutionary justice has never been a crime. Just as George Jackson and his comrades in their day, we are "in the business of attempting to transform the criminal mentality into a political revolutionary mentality." This is the key. So stay strong, brothas and sistas, inside these plantations--our communities are in dire need of the new men and women and youths to return home. Remember always that our struggle is one. Power to the People, Freedom Now.

In Solidarity Your Brother in Struggle!

Israel's "Crime" Is Its Insistence on Surviving

Before sending Lewis and Clark west, Thomas Jefferson dispatched Meriwether Lewis to Philadelphia to see Dr. Benjamin Rush. The eminent doctor prepared a series of scientific questions for the expedition to answer. Among them, writes Stephen Ambrose, "What affinity between their (the Indians) religious ceremonies and those of the Jews?" Jefferson and Lewis, like many of their day and ours, were fascinated by the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel and thought they might be out there on the Great Plains.

They weren't. They weren't anywhere. Their disappearance into the mists of history since their exile from Israel in 722 B.C. is no mystery. It is the norm, the rule for every ancient people defeated, destroyed, scattered and exiled. With one exception, a miraculous story of redemption and return, after not a century or two but 2,000 years.

Remarkably, that miracle occurred in our time. Last week marked its 60th anniversary: the return and restoration of the remaining two tribes of Israel, Judah and Benjamin, later known as the Jews, to their ancient homeland.

Besides restoring Jewish sovereignty, the establishment of the State of Israel embodied many subsidiary miracles, from the creation of the first Jewish army since Roman times to the only recorded instance of the resurrection of a dead language, Hebrew, now the daily tongue of a vibrant nation of 7 million.

As historian Barbara Tuchman once wrote, Israel is "the only nation in the world that is governing itself in the same territory, under the same name, and with the same religion and same language as it did 3,000 years ago."

During its early years, Israel was often spoken of in such romantic terms. Today, such talk is considered naive, anachronistic, even insensitive, nothing more than Zionist myth designed to hide the true story, i.e. the Palestinian narrative of dispossession.

Not so, Palestinian suffering is, of course, real and heart wrenching, but what the Arab narrative deliberately distorts is the cause of its own tragedy, the folly of its own fanatical leadership, from Haj Amin al-Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem (Nazi collaborator who spent World War II in Berlin), to Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser to Yasser Arafat to Hamas of today, that repeatedly chose war rather than compromise. Palestinian dispossession is a direct result of the Arab rejection then and now, of a Jewish state of any size on any part of the vast lands the Arabs claim as their exclusive patrimony. That was the cause of the war 60 years ago that, in turn, caused the refugee problem. And it remains the cause of war today.

Six months before Israel's birth, the United Nations had decided by a two-thirds majority that the only just solution to the British departure from Palestine would be the establishment of a Jewish state and an Arab state side by side. The undeniable fact remains: the Jews accepted that compromise, the Arabs rejected it. Israel's crime is not its policies but its insistence on living.

On the day the Arabs, and the Palestinians in particular, make a collective decision to accept the Jewish state, there will be peace, as Israel proved with its treaties with Egypt and Jordan. Until that day, there will be nothing but war. And every "peace process," however cynical or well-meaning, will come to nothing.

What Are Your Fears, Dad?

Dad, why did you just leave;
 It seems as though because of me
 Exactly why I'll never ever know
 Because you're not man enough to
 phone

It's been so many lonely years
 And you never helped subside my
 fears

I just can't count how many nights
 I cried and cried the night throughout

Please, Dad, know I still love you
 Despite all you've ever done or can do
 I just wanted it to always be
 You, Mom, Leslie, Robbie, and me

But you've always been strung out
 And didn't give a damn about
 You've never cured any of our fears
 Mom's now gone and you still don't care

My Source of Pain
 No one knows how my heart bleeds
 Or how my soul continuously pleads
 It's my fault this happened to you
 And pain kills me everyday through

I will never be happy again
 Because of the source of my pain
 If not for me you'd still be around

Now our next writer we really gotta give it up to him for being real open with his emotions. It's something that takes a lot for somebody to express his deep emotions about his problems in life! He writes us from a Correctional Facility in Amarillo, Texas. So please give him a warm welcome folks.

Instead of resting under the ground

My feelings for you will never change
 'Cause I know I'll see you one day
 again

But every time I'm reminded of you
 My heart bleeds and my soul pleads, too.

Now That You're Gone
 Mama, I miss you now that you're
 gone
 I should have showed you a lot more
 love, Mom

But all I done was use and abuse
 drugs
 How it hurts; I should have given you
 more hugs

You've been gone since December of
 2003

And only God knows how it's been
 destroying me
 When Aunt Sandy wrote and told me
 the way

It broke my heart, I didn't know what
 to say

I really regret the way I treated you
 'Cause no matter what, your love

remained true

I wish I'd have done a lot more to love
 you
 But now that you're gone, this will
 never do

Dancing With the Wind
 Dancing with the wind;
 Here she comes, blowin' like a storm
 again.
 When I dance with her it's short and
 sweet
 'Cause before I know it, I'm off my
 feet.

Dancing with the wind
 And now she brings her friend to the
 game.
 But this time she isn't playing fair,
 So I must dance with care and be
 aware.

Dancing with the wind
 Although I know she's dangerous
 indeed.
 But I'll take the dare; I do not care
 How or why she hurts me. I'll be
 there.

DARRON

A Tale of Three Trees

Once upon a time, in a galaxy far, far away (just kidding, that's another story!)... Okay, here we are...

Long, long ago in a forest far, far way lived three very different trees. Although they were different, the three of them had one thing in common. They all had lofty aspirations to become something special in life. The olive tree dreamed of becoming a finely crafted treasure chest. It wanted to hold gold, silver, and precious jewels. One day, while out in the forest, a woodsman did in fact choose the olive tree. The olive tree was so thrilled! But when the craftsman began working on him, the tree realized they weren't making him into the beautiful treasure chest he envisioned. They were making him into a manger to hold food for dirty, smelly animals. Heartbroken because his dreams were shattered, he felt worthless and totally discouraged.

The second tree, which was a mighty oak tree, dreamed of becoming a huge ship that would one day carry kings across the vast ocean. When the woodsman cut down the oak, he got so excited! But as time went on, he realized that the craftsman was not making him into a huge ship. They were making him into a tiny, little fishing boat. He was crushed that his life, his dream, had come to this.

The third tree was a pine tree, tall and sturdy. His only dream in life was to continue growing taller as if reaching out to Heaven. But in a split second, a bolt of lightning sent it tumbling to the ground, destroying his dream along with it.

All three of these trees had felt like they failed, like they had lost their self worth. Not one of their dreams came to be. End of story, right? Wrong... God had other plans!

Many years later, Mary and Joseph couldn't find a place to have their baby, their beloved boy. They finally found a stable and when Jesus was born, they placed him in a manger made from ?...you guessed it, the olive tree! The olive tree wanted to hold precious jewels, but God had better plans...for it now held the greatest

Our next writer is writing to us from Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, Ca. Darron is a great writer. He always seems to come through with a well written story for all of us to read and learn something to. Darron is a not a new writer as he sends his pieces on a monthly basis. On his upcoming piece Darron tells us a story with a real big lesson behind it. So without anymore stalling please enjoy Darron's story!

mankind has ever known!

A few years went by and Jesus grew up. One day He needed a boat to cross to the other side of the lake. He did not choose a large, fancy ship but rather a small, simple fishing boat made from ?... yup, you guessed it!... the oak tree! The oak tree wanted to carry important kings across the ocean, but, once again, God had other plans... for the oak now carried the King of all kings!

A few more years went by and some Roman soldiers were rummaging around in the forest. They came across an old pile of scrap wood. The pine tree just knew they were coming to chop him up for fire wood. But, oddly and to his surprise, they cut only two small pieces out of him and formed a cross. And it was upon this pine tree that Jesus was crucified. That pine tree is still pointing people, God's people, toward Heaven to this very day!

So there you have it, the story of the three trees. Each one felt that they had lost their value, their self-worth, but in fact, each one, in its own way, became integral parts of the greatest story ever told! One thing you can be certain of... God knows your value... He sees the potential in all of us. You may not understand everything you are going through right now, but hold your head up high knowing that God is in control and has a great purpose in store for you! A plan for your life!

Your dreams may not be turning out the way you had hoped so far; worry not, for you have a lifetime ahead of you to "right" your ship. Learn from the mistakes that landed you where you are today. Take accountability (stop blaming others), be responsible for your own actions and stop blaming the circumstances around you. That, my friend, is the first step in becoming a man.

As of right now, I feel I'm on the right path, getting a job, going to college. I got my priorities straight now. I'm doing a lot better than I was doing when I came in, that's for sure.

I just wanna do good out there, I don't even wanna come back. This is it for me. I want to do good for me, for my family, for my grandmother. I want to live a normal life with no stress, without having to worry about reporting to somebody.

read the rest of Genevieve's POW on page 5

